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# THE HIGHER LIFE IN ART

WITH A CHAPTER ON HOBGOBLINS

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WYKE BAYLISS



600029944Y

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

(Uniform with "*The Higher Life in Art.*")

## THE WITNESS OF ART

OR

### THE LEGEND OF BEAUTY.

CONTAINING

- I. THE LEGEND. 1. THE KING'S MESSENGER. 2. THE MESSAGE.
- II. THE WITNESS OF ART. 1. THE ANTIQUE. 2. THE RENASCENCE. 3. THE MODERN SCHOOLS.
- III. BLESSING THE CORNFIELDS; OR, LANDSCAPE ART IN POETRY. 1. CERES. 2. THE KING'S GARDEN.
- IV. SEEING THE INVISIBLE; OR, THE USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN ART. 1. THE SONS OF GOD. 2. THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY. 3. MEN AND ANGELS. 4. THE SON OF MAN. 5. KISSING CARRION. 6. WITNESSING AGAIN.

#### OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"He has given us a book which is suffused with a genuine artistic spirit, and which shows that Art is a witness to truth and righteousness."—*British Quarterly Review*.

"We cannot pay a higher compliment than to say that it is worthy to have thoughtful readers. . . . Truly a high ideal of the artist's calling; yet who shall say that it is too high, or that in any other spirit Art can fulfil the great mission here assigned it of witnessing against the grinding and pitiless competition of our times? It is well in days when Art seems to run some risks in the eager race of money-making, to have this view of the matter broadly stated, and to Mr. Bayliss belongs the credit of having stated it in a forcible and attractive way."—*Scotsman*.

"How exquisitely this is worked out must be left for the book itself to show; partial quotation would give no adequate notion of the subtlety of the idea. To those who, loving Art, and truth, and beauty, are willing to look below the surface of things, and to ponder over the real origin and meaning of those divine attributes which we typify by such names, 'The Witness of Art' will be a welcome friend and companion."—*Morning Post*.

"Ever pleasant to take up, giving us a glimpse into the rarer and more poetic life of painting, sculpture, and their belongings, as well as the influence they exercise upon the world. Mr. Bayliss's work will be a welcome guest in every studio where the English language is understood, and in every drawing-room where poetry and art are understood."—*Whitehall Review*.

"His words, well weighed in every sentence, will be received by students as so many truths uttered by one whose judgment is never at fault. It is not for us to attempt even to give an outline of what Mr. Bayliss has written. The book must be read from the first word to the last. Read it *will* be by all people of taste, and we affirm that it cannot be read without profit."—*Reliquary Quarterly Review*.

"Every page of it has a high—it may truly be said a holy—aim; yet there is a charm in them which would render it difficult for anyone to lay the book aside, when he has begun to read it, till the last page is reached."—*Art Journal*.

"We heartily welcome a second edition of 'The Witness of Art.' It is impossible to peruse this book without the keenest pleasure."—*Magazine of Art*.

"Mr. Bayliss has felt that the true scope of his subject was not an examination merely of brush against brush, or chisel against chisel, or chisel against brush, but really one including every worthy perception and type of the beautiful. . . . He will rise from its perusal with clear ideas of what Art has done for men in the great epochs of its development, and in what precise respects these great epochs differ from one another. And in closing the essay he will regret, as we have done, that it is so short."—*Standard*.

"A clever lecturer might pick more than one chapter as a good bit for evening readings."—*Graphic*.

"We have found unusual pleasure in the perusal of this book. Its writer possesses a correct, thoughtful, and exquisite taste, and is gifted with a style that is at once striking and poetical. We can heartily express the desire that the young, whose eyes are being opened to perceive the beauty and glory of the universe, should have the guidance of one as able and sympathetic as this author. If they will turn to his pages, they will find them full of interest and instruction. None can read his words without receiving help and guidance for which they will be thankful."—*Literary World*.

"Both thought and style are fresh, graceful, and striking, with touches here and there of true poetry, and even genius; while the critical judgments, for the most part, are fair and sympathetic, marked, too, by the frequent presence of a subtle insight and wide vision. We have been specially interested by his defence of Raphael against Ruskin, and of English Landscape against M. Taine. His attack on the 'Ingoldsby Legends' is uncommonly vigorous, and in great measure deserved; while the droll fun poked at Milton's angels is very amusing. The book will interest not merely Art students, but also readers of all classes, for there is little that is technical about it."—*Daily Free Press*.



"Mr. Bayliss is one of the few artists who can think as well as paint, and write as well as think. His pages teem with terse and practical criticism on well-known artists."—*Liverpool Daily Post*.

"A difficult and very interesting subject is treated with considerable critical insight and some novelty of illustration. The main conclusions are not only true, but such as are to some extent overlooked. It is not often that the mean is hit, in Art or Art-criticism, between love of mere realism on the one hand, and too unreal and vague aims at what is beyond the reach of Art. The specialty of Mr. Bayliss's view of his subject is that he inculcates realism as the true *means* in Art without mistaking it for its *end*, and that he brings to his task an enthusiasm and earnestness of feeling, a conviction of the serious and beneficent purport of Art, which is too rare a characteristic at present."—*The Builder*.

"A curious and deeply interesting work, written in an animated style, with the object of raising Art to its true position in the eyes of the thoughtful. The author has an eloquence of expression, and a keen sense of humour, and he uses both."—*Echo*.

"Good books on Art are not too plentiful, and a work like that of Mr. Bayliss, who has something to say on the subject, and can say it most forcibly and pleasantly, is a most welcome addition to the literature of Art. The work throughout shows that the author has thought much and to some purpose on Art, and his teachings have all the more attraction that he speaks with the authority of one who is untrammelled by the rules of any school, and whose chief motive is the love of the true and beautiful in Art. The illustrations have been most judiciously selected, and, both in drawing and printing, are models of perfection."—*North British Daily Mail*.

"With the great mass of Mr. Bayliss's brilliant criticism we heartily agree. Art is the ideal element in human life, and he has said so in a truly worthy and artistic form."—*Literary Churchman*.

"It contains argument, and also finds room for the free exercise of the imagination."—*The Guardian*.

"A work which will fully repay a careful and intelligent perusal, and serve as a pleasant companion to the Art student."—*Record*.

"There are few things upon which greater diversities of opinion might be looked for than the place and influence of Art amongst us, but the thoughts offered in these pages are evidently the product of a cultured mind, and though they may not be endorsed at all points by the reader, there is much to be learned from them. The style renders the task of reading an exceedingly pleasant one, and we cannot but welcome this contribution to the literature of an important and interesting subject."—*The Rock*.

"The legend of Beauty and the Beast has been turned to good account. The ethics of æsthetics is certainly a subject with a very scant literature, especially when we consider how important a function the 'King's Messenger Beauty' performs in the world; and how closely related she is to those other messengers, Virtue and Truth. The idea of the legend is well worked out in glancing over the history of Art, and the terrible lapse it underwent in the dark ages, and the chapter entitled 'The Message' is a very pleasant discursive roam through some of the phases of the art influence of Mythology. The chapters on the Antique, the Renaissance, and the Modern Schools are well worthy of an attentive perusal. 'Kissing Carrion,' is a thoughtfully-written criticism on the debased use of the supernatural in Art; and the vigorous and trenchant onslaught on such productions as some of the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' when viewed, from a true artist's point of view, is deserving of high commendation."—*Spectator*.

"The manfully-stated hypothesis or 'argument' of the book would alone make it valuable as an appeal from spirit to spirit. Mr. Bayliss does seem to have faith in Art still, as the gift of God to man, in order that man may be drawn nearer to Him by the sight of beauty, which is the symbol of His unknown perfection. She is the King's messenger;—she is like Beauty in the tale we all know, and from time to time she has revisited the Beast (we fear this image represents our noble selves); and she married him in the early *renaissance*, when the traditions of Greek beauty were wedded to the Christian inspiration. The tale ends there, having answered its purpose. For it may do some hearts good, at least, to have a man of ripe experience in Art, and wide range of knowledge, who will give God the glory in it, and set his word to the belief that it is not merely ornamental . . . Mr. Bayliss writes like a painter who has read a good deal of poetry with a choice feeling of his own, and we feel that he tells us to delight in English landscape with all the more authority, because he enjoys it so heartily himself. He modestly admits that the book proves nothing; but that depends a good deal on who reads it. It is, at all events, a work which must give sincere pleasure to those who believe in spiritual things, and reckon Art among them."—*Contemporary Review*.

"We do not quote at greater length because we wish our readers to read the book, as a whole—for themselves. As a genial, considerate, appreciative, message from the artist to the non-artistic public, it is likely to be of especial value; and we prefer interesting our readers in the book itself, to interesting them by extracts from it. Such a book as Mr. Bayliss has written may be greatly welcomed; it is the work of an artist who does not talk Art, but Nature; who does not write only for brothers of his craft, but for mankind generally."—*The Inquirer*.

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LONDON: DAVID BOGUE.

# THE HIGHER LIFE IN ART.





THE  
HIGHER LIFE IN ART

WITH A CHAPTER ON  
HOBGOBLINS BY THE GREAT MASTERS.

BY  
WYKE BAYLISS, F.S.A.,  
AUTHOR OF "THE WITNESS OF ART."

"Merry, or sad, shall't be? As merry as you will.  
I have one of Sprites and Goblins"—



London:  
DAVID BOGUE,  
3, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE, TRAFALGAR SQUARE.  
1879.



*TO MY COMPANIONS IN ART — WHO,  
ALTHOUGH STRIVING AFTER THE HIGHER  
LIFE, ARE YET TEMPTED OR DECEIVED OR  
ASSAILED BY MANY HOBGOBLINS — THIS  
VOLUME IS INSCRIBED BY*

*THE AUTHOR.*

LONDON, 1879.





## PREFACE.

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**I**T will not be necessary to detain the reader with many prefatory remarks. I am not quite sure, indeed, whether these few words should not rather be called an interlude than a preface. The real preface to this book, is the book which preceded it.

In "The Witness of Art," I said, "Nature is God's language, and Art is ours; Nature is a poem written by God, and Art is man's translation of it. It is thus that Art becomes a Witness; and its witness is two-fold. In every rendering of the splendour of creation it is a witness to us of the glory of the Creator; in every gross conception that we place upon canvas or cut into marble it is a witness against us of the blindness of our eyes or the evil of our hearts." This was my theme, and it led me to consider,—

(1). The distinctive characteristics of the Antique, the

Renaissance, and the Modern Schools ; or Art as representing the Passion of our Lives. (2). Landscape Art in Poetry ; or Art as representing the World in which we live. (3). The Use of the Supernatural in Art ; or Art as representing the Chimeras of the imagination.

I do not think that such a study of Art in the light of its historical associations, can lead to any other conclusion than that as every sanatory influence of climate, of circumstance, of habit, which gives to the human race a higher perfection of physical development, tends to exalt Art as the representation of human beauty—so every advance in mental culture, in intellectual vigour, in purity of life and manners, tends in the like proportion to exalt Art as the representation of human life and action.

If, however, the truth of a proposition is to be judged by the universality of its acceptance, the position I have taken is hopelessly at fault. To one who has seen much of studio life in London and on the Continent there is nothing more sad than the constant surrender by the artist of his birthright in this matter. Always and everywhere the statement is met with doubt, if not by a direct negative. "The tendency of luxury is to demoralization. Art is luxury—therefore the tendency of Art is to demoralization ;" or again, "The decadence of morals begins when Art culminates." These are the simple embodiments of arguments or sentiments very

commonly expressed. But the syllogism is false, and the historical statement is misleading. The affirmation in the minor term is a *petitio principii*. And it is not shown, nor indeed can it be, that the decay of morals is consequent upon any high position to which Art may have attained; while it is conveniently forgotten that when morals have declined Art has perished also.

It is not however by a syllogism or its analysis that the truth can be elicited in this instance; not at least until those who discuss the question are a little more agreed as to the premises. Nor do I expect to prove my case by a brief *résumé* of this kind. But the steps I have already taken are the best indication of the direction in which I must travel if I pursue the subject further. To compare the Greek with the Mediævalist, or the Landscapist with the painter of History, is to compare with each other different translations from the same poem. This I have done. But the question remains—Can any translation at all so nearly approach the divine original as to help us in our understanding of it?

There are two methods of dealing with this question. I might plead results. I might show, for instance, that since the day when David Cox laid down his blacksmith's hammer, we have been steadily answering it in the affirmative, by receiving into our lives, through the interpretation of Nature given to us by him—and by



men like him, whether painters or poets—a new happiness; a happiness that creates no new evil, but rather strengthens us to resist the old. Or I might plead that God gave us the artist, as really as He gave us the landscape which the artist paints; and show that David Cox never laid down his hammer at all—but only exchanged it for that of Thor.

Now I know that the Scylla and Charybdis of all writers on Art lie in the direction of attempting too much or of being content with too little. Such a subject therefore may well precipitate me upon the one, or overwhelm me with the other. Nay, I fear it must do so in the judgment of some of my readers. For the world of Art is simply commensurate with the universe. To include everything that comes within its range is impossible; to exclude anything must be to sacrifice the very thing which to some eyes will seem most precious.

In this strait I have held steadily before me the following considerations. First, to write as an artist for artists. The painter who labours diligently in his calling cannot find time for the reading of elaborate treatises; and yet there is no class of men who have better opportunities than have artists for thinking out the great problems of their profession. These problems briefly stated are the salt of studio life.

Secondly, amongst lovers of Art (and there are few

who do not love Art) there is need for a greater catholicity of thought. If artists are divided into schools, amateurs are subdivided into classes. Like the peasant who knows nothing of the world beyond the hills which surround his village home, so they too often know nothing of the splendours of Art out of their own narrow circle of dilettanti. One of the most distinguished amateurs of London (a great authority amongst his friends) hearing me speak with regret of the death of George Mason, asked me what he painted. The horizon of this man was bounded by the walls of a single gallery in Pall Mall. But if the artist has little time to read books on Art, the amateur generally has still less. Art is not his profession. It only shares his attention with other pursuits; and the leisure he can spare to it he naturally (though not always wisely) devotes to its practice. I have tried to deal with the subject therefore as I should like it to be dealt with for me, if I were an amateur, with limited time at my disposal, and yet desirous—so far as I could do so without hindrance to the main purpose of my life—to see a little of what is “beyond the hills.”

And lastly, I have thought—How shall I write so that my words may not be without value to those who have not yet known or cared anything about Art? To them let me say, if they will read these few pages, they will find that Art is not an occupation or an amusement only,

but a life to be lived. *Art is to the soul what climate is to the body; it carries with it life or death.* Believing this I will not trouble them with technicalities. I do not propose to teach them to sharpen a pencil or to mix colours on a palette, neither do I desire to force upon them any esoteric interpretation of Nature. My aim is to place before them a measure of the value of Art that is not to be found in the preciousness of the artist's work as merchandise, nor in its beauty for purposes of decoration—but rather in an occult presence which goes with it, a communication of mind with mind, through which we gain a wider range of vision, a deeper penetration into the mysteries of life, a truer perception of our relationship with each other and with the world which is our home.

It is this occult presence which I have called "The Higher Life in Art." As to the Hobgoblins, it will be time enough to speak of them when they appear upon the scene.

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# THE HIGHER LIFE IN ART.

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## I.

### *MY LADY THE PROLOGUE.*

TO one who had never seen a rose, the most learned definition would not give so exquisite a sense of the loveliness of the flower as would the simple act of presenting one fresh gathered from the tree. And yet definitions are not without value, but they should follow, rather than precede, some general knowledge of the subject under consideration. True definition is like the perfect focussing of a glass when the star to be examined has been discovered ; but the star must first be brought within the field of the instrument. When the rose has been gathered, it is time enough to tear it petal from petal to see the tender calyx and delicate stamen.

I propose, therefore, to define only as I go on : to look at a star here, and a flower there, striving to learn from each what it can tell me of the Higher Life in Art.

Not until the last petal falls from the flower is the analysis perfect—not until the last page of the book is ended will the definition be complete. And yet, without attempting to express in any single phrase all that I mean by the Higher Life in Art, I can at once so narrow the field as to exclude from it some irrelevant matter, and at the same time make clear the purpose with which I write.

The term "High Art" has become so familiar to us in its application to certain schools, or styles of treatment or choice of subject, that it is possible for a reader coming upon the words "The Higher Life in Art" to assume that they are only changes rung upon a theme which has already been debated in every artist's studio since the days of Phidias. And if it were my desire simply to entertain with a dissertation upon Art, I should be content for such an assumption to remain unchallenged. It is so easy to go on in a well-beaten track. It is so much more formidable to strike out a new path. And, moreover, in keeping to a subject already familiar and of known interest, I should at least have been sure of some sympathy, whatever views I might have expressed. But my purpose is much more than this. It is to break clean through all the old distinctions between "High Art" and "Low." It is to substitute, or rather to place side by side with the old, a new formula of expression, that shall direct our thoughts

into a broader channel, and yield us at last a better standpoint from which to judge what are the noblest conditions and highest purposes of Art and where we may look for their fulfilment.

Let me say at once, then, that High Art and the Higher Life in Art are subjects entirely distinct from each other. The one divides the schools, the other binds them together in a common purpose. The one deals with the choice of subject, the other with the spirit in which the subject is handled. The one is eclectic, the other is catholic. The one is the casting out of all things that are common or unclean, the other is the finding that all things have been cleansed by God.

The Higher Life in Art is that element in æsthetics which brings us into direct and sympathetic relationship with Nature.

Are we not, then, always in contact with Nature without the intervention of Art? Yes, as a ship is in contact with the sea out on the Atlantic; and with the air, as the fresh breeze fills its sails; and with the rocks, too, as it lies dashed in pieces in sight of the haven where it would be. Nature is "My Lady the Prologue," without which the play cannot so much as begin. There is no mistake as to our contact with Nature, or the close grip with which she holds us to her. But, close as is

this grip, it is all on one side. She seems to understand us—that, however, is another question—but what do we, of our own individual experience, each for himself, know of her—as represented, for instance, by the world in which we live, or the great family of which we form a part? A few voices speak to us out of the throng—but the many are dumb. A few eyes kindle as they look into ours—

“Stars, stars,  
And all eyes else dead coals.”

A brother, a sister, a wife, two or three friends; this is, to most of us, the sum of our knowledge of mankind. It is as though we laid our finger on the keyboard of an organ, touching a note here and there. A flute voice answers us, or a vox-humana, perhaps even a vox-angelica; but we do not know the instrument until the master musician sits down before it and we hear the thunder of the diapason, the rush of mighty harmonies, the tender strains of melody. And Art is our master musician. Erase from our lives all that we have received only through books or pictures,—leave us each to our own personal experience of life and manners, of the surroundings of our homes, of the countries we have visited, of the vicissitudes and mysteries of the natural world,—and very little will be left to tell us what man is, or whether God has been mindful of him at all. If Nature is my Lady the Prologue, Art is the Drama

which follows ; a drama of which we are not spectators only, but in which we are ourselves actors. The books we have read and the pictures we have seen are so many acts in this drama, and they have become part of our lives. They have become so identified in our imaginations with the things they represent to us that we forget sometimes that we see with the collective vision of many eyes and think the thoughts of many minds—that in Art we live and move and have our being.

This is what Art is to us, because it is the greater, and we are the less. It is one of the environments that is daily shaping our lives to fair or foul issues. We cannot escape from it even if we would, any more than we can escape from Nature. It also has its grip upon us, and we—like Frankenstein—are at the mercy of an image made by our own hands. The sky-line of our streets that crushes our eyes as with a weight, forbidding us to lift them from the mud upon the ground ;—the blank walls and ungainly furniture of our dwellings that make mud in our minds ;—it is we who have made them, and cursed them with ugliness ; they only return to us the curse, in mental depression, with its inevitable tale of physical suffering. It has been said by a French critic of English manners, that in London a row of houses has been built along the river side of the Strand, with the view of guarding the inhabitants from the danger, annually recurring, of joining hands and rushing



down together to drown themselves in the Thames. And he assigns as the cause of this terrible temptation to self-destruction the dulness of the weather that prevails here in November. Of his facts I will say nothing, but I hesitate to accept his reasoning. If the temptation does really exist, it is the effect—not of the much maligned month of fogs—but of the despondency deepening into terror arising from the thought that turn which way you will there is no escape—to the east, Temple Bar—to the west, the cupola of the National Gallery.\* It may be difficult to measure the amount of evil, but it is not difficult to see that only evil can come of such environment. But then there is environment of another kind, the effects of which are still more difficult to measure, because good is stronger than evil, as much stronger as God is stronger than the devil. Charles Kingsley, writing to his wife, says of Salisbury Cathedral, "That wonderful grey Alp amongst the trees. It is like a great mountain with its strata, and secondary ridges, and spurs, and lower peaks, all leading up to that great central aiguille which rushes up into the highest

\* Since this was written the stones of Temple Bar, venerable with age, have been carted away—but no change is yet observable in the little cupola which still adorns "the finest site in Europe." Happily, however, the external hideousness of a building does not frighten the inhabitants of London, who are used to that sort of thing, from entering it. On Easter Monday last the National Gallery opened its doors to nearly 30,000 visitors. For many hours



blue, till you expect to see the clouds hanging round its top, and fancy the jackdaws are condors round the peak of Chimborazo. It awes you, too, without crushing you; you can be cheerful under its shadow, but you could not do a base thing." Charles Kingsley could not have done a base thing anywhere, whether under the shadow of Salisbury Cathedral or in Fleet Street; but that does not lessen the force of the inference that the environment of "sweetness and light" was good for him. The erection of a fine edifice on the north side of Trafalgar Square, and the transfer of the Arch of Titus to the east end of the Strand, might not efface the calendar of crimes to be tried at the next assizes; but because Art cannot do everything it is unreasonable to conclude that it can do nothing. This, at least, it can do. It can so transfigure a little colour that lies inert upon the palette—a little grey and brown and white—into a living presence that our hearts shall beat faster only to look upon it. It can so link thought with thought, and put them into grave or sweet words, that we may look through Shakespeare's eyes upon an English garden of

the people thronged in at the rate of 100 per minute. The weather was dreary in the extreme; nevertheless, in its beautiful interior, filled with perhaps the choicest collection of pictures in the world, nobody appeared to be at all troubled by the close proximity of the Thames. This is certainly a more hopeful aspect of affairs than the remarks of our lively neighbour would have led us to expect. It is at least encouraging to those who love, and believe in, Art.

three hundred years ago—or hear the storm-shaken pines which make music in the Volkslied—or see the shadow that lay dark on Dante's life as lies the shadow of the cypresses upon his grave at Ravenna. It can so build stone upon stone, and shape them into beauty, that Richard of Salisbury of the thirteenth century, shall speak to Charles Kingsley of the nineteenth, making him stronger for his duty, and happier in performing it. And the force which can do these things is surely one of which it is well for us to take account. Nor is this all; for, whatever Art can or cannot do, it is quite certain that *we* cannot so much as live our lives without it, any more than the bees can build their cells without the fine instinct which controls their labour,—only we sometimes go wrong, while they always go right. It is a question of degree. Whether we build well or ill—we build. Every picture that the artist paints or the merchant hangs upon his walls, every statue we set up in our midst, every book we read, every song we sing, as surely as every roof-tree that shelters a hearthstone, is a chamber in the great palace of Art in which some soul shall for a time dwell. Let us see to it that the chambers are at least clean and full of light. Such chambers have been built by those who came before us. Salisbury Cathedral is one of them. And there has been one also, for centuries, in every village in England where an ivied tower or a simple chancel arch has touched the hearts of

priest and squire and people with a sense of beauty even when they least knew it. And we are the better as a people for these things; better for the peals of bells that have clashed out their chimes from the church towers, raining music on thatched roofs—like Danaë's gold, only that it does not corrupt—and on the labourers at their toil—and on those who are at rest, making the heart soft as the furrows are made soft by the drops of rain. Better, as really—though not in the same measure—as we are for the faithful service that has been ministered within the churches' walls. For whatever else is true about Art, this is true. Art is always and everywhere "filling our eyes and fulfilling our ears" with the knowledge of good and evil. Desdemona, accused of treachery which her soul abhors, says in her innocence—"Are there such women?" What does she know? What do any of us know of a thousand things which exist around us? I do not say the knowledge is good for us. I say only that it comes to us through Art. The simplest form of words cannot be put together without Art, any more than can the stones of the chancel arch. Whether it be "a woful ballad made to our mistress' eyebrows," or a cry of battle, or a hymn for our harvest-home—it is the poet who measures out for us what we shall say. In the theatre, in the drawing-room, and in the choir alike—it is the musician who makes us dream, following his spells. In

the senate, on the platform, in the pulpit—it is the rhetorician who stirs us to action. So that bad Art means much more than bad artists. It means dreary surroundings in our dwellings, ignoble buildings in our streets, evil questionings in the exercise of our religion. It means everything between the idle stagnation and the ultimate corruption of faculties which should be clear and fertilizing as the waters of a running brook.

Against forces like these the old distinctions between “High Art” and “Low” are charms that will not conjure. The question is not what is elegant to paint, or pleasant to write about. It is rather—how shall we, as artists, get a little closer to Nature, as we can imagine the Christian would like to get a little closer to his God?

This closeness to Nature is “The Higher Life in Art.” Through it only can Art be the means of raising us ever so little towards a more perfect manhood.

## II.

### THREE SUNSETS.

NATURE and Art are always either allies or enemies ; there is no common ground on which they can meet, each ignoring the presence of the other. Like the armies of a commonwealth, they may be divided by civil war—but if they meet they meet as forces that must either fraternize or fight.

Here, however, it is necessary for me to guard against a possible misunderstanding of my purpose. There are two elements in this question, namely, *direction* and *force*. Either of these may be variable or constant ; but they must be considered separately, and for the moment I have only to do with the question of direction. Where there is movement of any kind there must be force. Whether the delicate sails of the light-mill are driven or attracted by the solar ray may be a matter for experimental philosophy, but that they move at all is sufficient evidence that some force is acting upon them, the impetus of which may be calculated by a very simple



process of arithmetic. That there is any movement is first to be established—its utilization will certainly follow. With what degree of cogency Nature and Art affect us, or how easily to be resisted are their influences, I am not now careful to inquire; but that they do affect us, really—not only in our emotions or feelings, but in our desires, in our dispositions, in our relationship with each other, in the success or failure of the purpose for which we live—this is the proposition which I place before my readers.

We have seen that Art and Nature are environments of our lives from which there is no escape; let us consider for a moment the difference between our relationship with one and with the other.

Nature speaks to us in our own language, so that if we do not altogether understand her, yet we are comforted, as a child is comforted when his mother sings by his cradle at night, knowing nothing of "the time that shall come," which is, nevertheless, the burden of her song, and that which gives to it its plaintive tenderness.

Art speaks to us in a language we have yet to learn, and until we have learned it we can neither understand it nor be comforted.

A hundred exquisite passages rise to the mind in illustration of the first of these truths, namely, the directness with which Nature speaks to us. I will refer

to three only. The first is from the story of "Yvonne and Rohan," in Wedmore's "Pastorals of France":—

"Yvonne rose to her feet—the dusk was gathering. Rohan, while she spoke, had looked out rather hopelessly on the last of the sunset; but the beauty of it had not been lost upon him or on the girl. The poor never talk of scenery, but the finer spirits among them sometimes sit and watch it, with all its changing lights, reverently; with placid hands crossed or folded, as in the act of devotion. Of it they have nothing to say, but it somehow speaks to them—things half understood, strange snatches of suggestion of wider life and thought as they wait with their eyes fixed in their grave loneliness."

This is the cradle-song of Nature—what does it matter that the child does not understand? It is enough that he recognizes his mother's voice, and knows that she is singing to him.

And this influence of Nature upon the untaught is not limited to scenes of pastoral beauty, or restful quietude, or the grace of calm, any more than the influence of the mother's voice is limited in its action to the child's life, or is forgotten when the child becomes a man. To some, indeed, these influences attain their full strength only when they are felt through storms and tempest—through the storms that beat upon us from without, through the tempests of fire we raise within ourselves, through dark nights and blinding days, through the exceeding great and bitter cry that goes up when we find that everything but these has failed us. And this leads me to my second illustration. It shall be



from a poem by Rossetti. Again the sea-shore ; again two lovers stand there, but from Yvonne and Rohan how different :—

“ And, standing silent now at last, I looked  
Into her scornful face ; and heard the sea  
Still trying hard to din into my ears  
Some speech it knew which still might change her heart  
If only it could make me understand.”

“ If only it could make me understand.” It is no more a cradle-song then, this that the sea sings, whose very end is sleep. It is the cry rather of another Rizpah, which, beginning with sleep, the sleep of her children, the sleep of death, shall end only when breaks the morning of the resurrection :—

“ One moment thus. Another, and her face  
Seemed further off than the last line of sea,  
So that I thought, if now she were to speak  
I could not hear her.”

What shall Rizpah do now ?—her children lost even to each other. The dusk is gathering ; the sun goes down ; a line of white surf is at their feet. Crimson, that is, to tell them of the love of God ; \* white, to plead for their

\* I do not know whether Mr. Rossetti intended any such symbolism in this passage. The passage is in itself so very beautiful that we may be well content to take it simply for a transcript from Nature ; yet it is also in perfect consonance with traditional usage ; and coming from so great a master of colour it is difficult to believe that it has not some such occult meaning.

own innocency ; the grey twilight to teach them to be humble. All this, and yet—

“Then came a fire  
That burn'd my hand ; and then the fire was blood,  
And sea and sky were blood and fire, and all  
The day was one red blindness ; till it seemed,  
Within the whirling brain's eclipse, that she  
Or I or all things bled or burned to death.  
And then I found her laid against my feet  
And knew that I had stabbed her.”

Even the great love of Rizpah cannot save her children now. If only she could make them understand ! If only when My Lady o' the Prologue speaks to us we could tell what would be the ending of the drama—would it not be well for us ?

It would be well. But can Art help us in this ? In its Higher Life I think it can ; that, however, is the question I have set myself to answer.

Observe first how very indistinct is the impression that Nature makes on us. If the sunset speaks to Yvonne it is “in strange snatches—of things half understood.” The first thing Art does is to give to these impressions a clearer and more definite shape. Let Yvonne and Rohan take to teaching in one of our Sunday Schools, and the sunset will very soon crystallize into the gates of “Jerusalem the Golden.” Bring Yvonne and Rohan to London, and let them work six

months at a milliner's in Oxford Street, and when next they take their holiday together you shall hear Rohan say to Yvonne, as they turn westward towards the Marble Arch, "Sweet thing in sunsets, pink centre with mauve trimmings."\* Nor is there anything strange in this; it means only that Art, in two of its simplest forms, the arrangement of words and the arrangement of colours, will have given its own definiteness to their impressions.

But with this difference. In the one case Art will have been the ally of Nature, deepening the impression as well as defining it; in the other case Art will have been the adversary of Nature, defining only to destroy.

Observe next the difficulty with which any impression is made. How hard the sea tries—with what iteration—with what persistence—if only it might make us understand. See, also, how easily the impression is effaced. One moment it is heard—he cannot indeed understand, but he knows that it is on his side, it is pleading with him, and for him—it is dinning in his ears. Another moment and he takes the sea itself to express his sense of the immeasurable distance that separates him from

\* I quote these words from memory, and regret very much that I cannot subpoena Mr. Punch, not only as a witness to the circumstances under which he heard them, but also to produce the little sketch to which they were attached.

all that he loves on earth. And still, without travelling beyond these simple illustrations, note last of all to what terrible issues these impressions of Nature may be perverted. In Rossetti's exquisite poem there is described another sunset, a sunset among the hills, where he (whose story the poem tells) first found the girl, a little child then, abandoned by her parents—

“Who kissed her long, and wept and made her weep,  
And gave her all the bread they had with them,  
And then had gone together up the hill  
Where we were sitting now, and had walked on  
Into the great red light : ‘and so,’ she said,  
‘I have come up here too ; and when this evening  
They step out of the light as they stepped in,  
I shall be here to kiss them.’”

Then he remembers the great famine ; how the church steps everywhere swarm with starved folk ; how the bread is weighed by armed men ; and he knows that the child has been left to charity, or God's chance. What can he do ?—worn and sick as he is, hungry and hunted to the death, he cannot leave her to die.

“With that God took my mother's voice and spoke,  
And sights and sounds came back and things long since,  
And all my childhood found me on the hills ;  
And so I took her with me.”

So the third sunset closes. But this great red light—these clouds—that were to him as God speaking—are the same that at last drove him to madness. Does

Nature, then, like the rocks of the Loreley, only reflect our cries? Is there no meaning in Nature except that which we put into her ourselves? Even then the matter concerns us very greatly; for in that case Art is the putting of this meaning into Nature, and the Higher Life in Art is where this meaning is good. Be this, however, as it may; between these three sunsets lie all the possibilities of Nature and Art.

### III.

#### *A WINTER'S TALE.*

**B**UT if what I have said be true, namely, that Nature speaks to us in our own language, while Art speaks in a language we have yet to learn, how can we reasonably turn to Art, the less known, to interpret the more familiar things of Nature ?

Because Art is the reflex and record of all that Nature has ever said to any or every one of us, at every time, in every place. To one an impression may have been blurred or indistinct ; but to another it will have been clear and well defined. To one it may have been only weakened by iteration ; to another each repetition will have come with accumulative force. To one it may have been evanescent as wave-marks on the sand ; to another it will have been indelible as the marks of the same waves on rocks of adamant. To one troubled with feverous dreams, a cloud stretched across the heavens may seem sinister in the extreme ; to another the same cloud will seem gracious with the coming rain. And then, even if our impressions are clear and strong



and true, how few they are ; how very little do we know, each for himself, of the world in which we live, or of the great family of which we form a part! *A few voices speak to us out of the throng—but the many are dumb. A few eyes kindle as they look into ours—*

“ Stars, stars,  
And all eyes else dead coals.”

*A brother, a sister, a wife, two or three friends ; this is, to most of us, the sum of our knowledge of mankind. It is more than the sum. See how large an abstract must be made from it. The friend is estranged, did we then really know him at all? The brother is in a far distant land, will he be the same to us when he returns? The child, our sister, never will return—it is a long time since she died—should we not like to know a little more of her? Voices that used to speak to us are heard no more. Eyes that used to be bright have faded into the darkness, and we are left alone—with Nature. We understand her language very well, but she has nothing more to say to us ; nothing at least that we care to hear. Let us learn this other language of which you speak, this strange language of Art.*

Listen then, and I will tell you what Art is. It is eyes to the blind ; it is strength to those who are weak ; it is gentleness to those who are strong ; it is manhood to the youth ; it is restitution to those who suffer wrong ; it is greeting to the absent ; it is faith to those who are

doubting ; it is hope to the desponding ; it is charity to all men. There is no state or condition in which we may be placed, but that Art will unfold to us the perfect complement of Life. Are we infirm with age, our spring-time long since past when we could "apprehend nothing but jollity" ?—yet though sad memories crowd fast upon us, though our hands tremble as we turn the familiar page, our youth comes back to us with Florizel, and we can say—

" I am but sorry, not afraid, delay'd  
But nothing alter'd, what I was, I am."

Or are we young in years ? ardent with the untried friendship of—

" Two lads that think there is no more behind,  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,  
And to be boy eternal."

—then Bohemia and Sicilia shall teach us something of that which comes with manhood. The child our sister, lost long years ago, lives always in Perdita ; and the flowers which fall—

" From Dis's waggon, daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty ; violets, dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes"—

—we take them all as from her hand. Have we been schooled hard by the suspicion of friends who wrong us ? then, as Leontes cries " Lead me to these sorrows," we

find that it is not the wronged who suffer most. Are we in authority? then the unrighteous judgment of the mad king shall be our warning. Are we rich in wealth and honours? then the shepherd's cottage shall reveal to us a king's daughter, or—

“No shepherdess; but Flora  
Peering in April's front.”

We may be councillors of state, but Autolycus shall go singing by—

“Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,  
And merrily hent the stile-a;  
A merry heart goes all the day,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a;”

—and, rogue as he is, it shall go hard with us if we cannot say with Camillo—

“Whom have we here?  
We'll make an instrument of this; omit  
Nothing may give us aid.”

We may be wrapped to the chin in the closest garb of supercilious epicureanism; but the country clown, enthralled with love, buying ribands and gloves for Mopsa, shall forbid us to think we have a monopoly of happiness. We may shrink from action because it is dangerous; but the brave woman who bearded the king amidst his own courtiers, teaching him his duty, shall teach us also ours. And her husband—flap-dragoned by the sea, his shoulder bone torn out by the bear, the bear mocking him first and dining on him afterward, and both roaring

louder than the sea and the storm together—shall not Antigonus teach us something of courage and fidelity? And what of Hermione's patient endurance of evil? what of Leontes' remorse? what of the meeting of these two at last? Paulina's triumph—Polixenes' reconciliation—Perdita kneeling for Hermione's blessing—Florizel, the happy inheritor of honour and love?

Only this—that it is nothing but a Winter's Tale.

Or this—that my Lady the Prologue deals with us as children. She sings to us at first only her cradle-song. We do not understand its full meaning, but we know that there is music in Nature. And then Nature is silent, and we strive to reawaken the sounds that we have heard. This is Art. *It is as though we laid our finger on the keyboard of an organ, touching a note here and there. A flute voice answers us, or a vox-humana, perhaps even a vox-angelica; but we do not know the instrument until the master musician sits down before it and we hear the thunder of the diapason, the rush of mighty harmonies, the tender strains of melody.* This music, so awakened, is the Higher Life in Art.

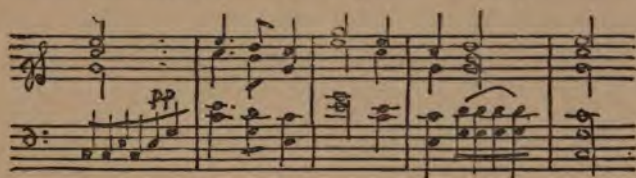
#### IV.

##### *ART FOR ART'S SAKE.*

**B**UT when we touch the keyboard of an organ or the string of a violin what is it that we hear? Is it the shaking only of a length of catgut? or the oscillation only of a column of air? Yes, if when a friend speaks to us that which we hear is only the vibration of the larynx of his throat. But the truth is we hear much more than this. We hear harmonies or melodies that have perhaps never before been sounded, and yet have been shaped in the mind of the musician with perfect knowledge of all their parts and of the manner in which the hearing of them will affect us. We hear again the thunder which rolled through Westminster Abbey two hundred years ago when Purcell first waked its echoes with a fugue or anthem. We hear the singing of the birds and the sighing of the wind over the fields of Eisenach to which Bach listened. We hear what Beethoven never could have heard—that is, Beethoven's music—since to him it must have



remained to the last only a dream of heaven. We hear when our friend speaks more than his voice, we hear in it—or through it—love, or regret, or hesitation, or trust. The conception of the musician and the desire of the friend are self-existent and communicable without the intervention of catgut or windpipe. This—



is sufficient to express the one, and this—*Come to me, without you I die*—is sufficient to express the other.

Of course we know all this. It is indeed because we know it so well that I take it as the basis of what I have to say. *Where there is movement of any kind there must be force. Whether the delicate sails of the light-mill are driven or attracted by the solar ray may be a matter for experimental philosophy, but that they move at all is sufficient evidence that some force is acting upon them.* Art is the movement, but Nature is the force. Art is the shaking of the column of air, but Nature is the melody. Art is the message, but Nature is the friend from whom it comes. And the different forms of Art we practise—poetry that is, or painting, or music, or architecture, or



sculpture—are but so many different methods of saying the same thing, of telling the same story, or of raising the same passions in our hearts; in a word, they are only so many channels of communication between ourselves and Nature.

And now see what this means. It means, first, that *Nature and Art are always either allies or enemies; that there is no common ground on which they can meet, each ignoring the presence of the other; that, like the armies of a commonwealth, they may be divided by civil war—but if they meet, they meet as forces that must either fraternize or fight.* Nor is this all; for if it means this, it means also that of itself Art can do nothing: that apart from Nature Art is nothing. It means that “Art for Art’s sake” is about as vain a cry as “war for war’s sake” would be wicked. But it is not only a vain cry, it is a false cry. One who knows nothing of the Higher Life in Art may nevertheless follow Art as a trade, as a profession, or as an amusement, but no one ever yet gave his life to Art for Art’s sake. As surely as the soldier who is only a soldier is a butcher, so the artist who is only an artist is a failure as a man. “Art for Art’s sake” is only a new synonym for dilettanteism; but it is dilettanteism stripped of its higher meaning, robbed of everything that makes it respectable or that bears the least seeming of life. If it could give us a Florizel or a Perdita, a Leontes or a Hermione—the thing is

impossible, I should rather say if it could give us anything approaching to a resemblance of them—it could do so only in the shape of marionettes. For Perdita to dance gracefully to the pulling of a string—for Hermione to sigh tenderly through the blowing of invisible bellows—this would be the ultimate glory of “Art for Art’s sake.”

The advantages of such an arrangement would indeed be manifest. It would be the long-looked-for realization of Florizel’s desire :—

“When you speak, sweet,  
I’d have you do it ever; when you sing,  
I’d have you buy and sell so; so give alms;  
Pray so; and, for the ordering your affairs,  
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you  
A wave o’ the sea, that you might ever do  
Nothing but that.”

But then, the objection is equally manifest—namely, that if once Florizel chanced to see the string the desire would cease for ever.

It must not be forgotten, however, that “Art for Art’s sake” has two phases of existence—the intellectual and the sensual. If the type of the first is to be found in the marionette, the type of the second may be discovered in paintings which are nothing more than “schemes of colour.” The one is a clavier without strings or pipes; the other is a string or a pipe without

any clavier. If the perpetual sounding of a single note is Music, then a Symphony in Drab may be Art. But it is Art in the condition of Antipholus, in the Comedy of Errors, of whom Dromio says :—

“ He is in Tartar limbo—  
—an everlasting garment hath him ;  
A fiend, a fairy, pitiless and rough ;  
A wolf, nay, worse, a fellow all in buff.”

Need I add that if “ Art for Art’s sake ” is a debased synonym for dilettanteism, it is the antithesis of the Higher Life. The Higher Life is also the love of Art, but it is Art for Nature’s sake. It is the love of Art because Art brings us into the presence of something greater and better than ourselves. Leontes and Florizel are dear to us because of our manhood and our youth—Perdita and Hermione because there are still girls and women like them in the world. It is thus only that Art touches our lives. Laying its hand upon us and upon Nature it brings us a little closer together—and so we are brought closer to God.

## V.

### LEAVES FROM A SKETCH-BOOK.

IT is scarcely possible to deal with this subject except through illustration. But the conclusion is inevitable; were I to employ a thousand similes they could only lead back to the one I first used—namely, that Nature is God's language, and Art is ours; that Nature is a poem written by God, and Art is man's translation of it. Now we know that a translation may err either by an uncouth choice of words or by a false interpretation of the original. Thus Homer has been made to say that Thetis heard Achilles weep. Thus, in an attempt to retain the *terza rima* of Dante, the crowd of timorous ghosts, which scarcely seemed to move they came so slowly, are made to "stalk," because the translator needed a rhyme for "walk." Thus Shakespeare has made his *début* in Paris as the "Divine Williams." Thus we are gravely informed, by a French writer, of a military occupation of Canterbury Cathedral unknown to English history, by the

simple process of planting *artillery* in every *stable*, instead of posting a *canon* in every *stall*. And thus Dryden in his twenty-ninth Ode from Horace says—

“The Syrian Star,  
Barks from afar,  
And with his sultry breath infects the sky.”

How could a star, even the dog star, “bark” its part in the music of the spheres? But perhaps it was not a star after all, but a Hobgoblin.

That, indeed, would explain it. For in the world of Hobgoblins we meet with strange company; and no part of that world is more thickly peopled with fantastic shapes than is the shadowy Hades of the translator. And yet, as I have said, all Art is but Translation. The flowers from which William Hunt made his sweet drawings I have seen lying upon his table. The sunsets that Turner painted, many of us have watched from Westminster Bridge. Perhaps all of us have listened to long sermons, and gone to sleep, like the little girl in Millais' picture. And the great works of Art which tell of heroic action or patient endurance—the gladiators of the Greek, the saints of the Mediævalist—what are they but translations of human life or passion?

Perhaps the nearest approach in Art to the creative power is that of the Architect. The transept and aisles and chapels of a great cathedral are by no means the direct transcript of anything in Nature. Yet even here the



same truth is manifested. The static forces by which the Architect builds stone on stone and keeps each in its place, are not his servants only, but his masters also. He uses them, but they control the outline of his work and direct it into its beautiful proportions.

Thus the Architect translates from Nature, as surely as does the Poet, or the Painter, or the Sculptor, because all these are Artists, though they work in very different materials. And not from Nature only, but they translate from each other. And so the work goes on, through many transmutations, changing as a lily changes with the soil in which it is planted or with the climate in which it opens its blossoms to the sun.

High above the corn-fields of the Eure-et-Loire towers the Cathedral of Chartres. Its doors stand open all day long—but they are barred to me by distance as effectually as if by bolts of iron. The great rose window gleams through the fretted arches, but I cannot see it. The sun goes down, and the cathedral lies in darkness. A pale moon rises and touches with silver light the ghostly sentinels in stone that through six centuries have kept guard at its portals.

Upon my table lies a little book, filled with many notes and sketches. But what has this to do with Chartres? See. I turn to a certain page and there I find a few lines laid out in such and such proportions,





a few details of clustered pillars, banded foliage, rose windows, stilted arches of the thirteenth century, delicate shrine work of a later period. And then, upon another



page I find this pencil sketch. And yet once more, turning the leaves, I come upon these words—

*A forest of tall pillars, autumn stained  
 Purple and russet gray, through which there glows  
 A crimson splendour when the day hath waned  
 And the great orb goes down in calm repose;  
 High through the vaulted darkness the great Rose  
 Drifts like a setting sun beyond a zone  
 Of silvery light where a pale window shows  
 The story of Christ's Passion writ in stone.  
 O glory of Art! not thou alone dost wear  
 These sacred symbols of the Love Divine;  
 We are His temples also and do bear  
 His image in our hearts, as on a shrine  
 Where the light burns for ever clear and bright,  
 Though the world drift into eternal night.*

Now these three pages of my sketch-book represent

three translations from the same original. The first I *know* to be true. Its truth can be tested by measurement and scale. And it is true not in the narrow sense in which Bitzer's definition was true, of which I shall speak more fully presently, for in Architecture the style is the life itself. As to the second, I hope there is some truth in it, though a pencil and a scrap of paper are but slight materials with which to work, and much that I should have liked to tell remains untold. But the third—here I begin to suspect something. The forest of tall pillars—the autumn stains—the drifting of the great rose (for as you move round the apse of Chartres and see the west window over the white tracery of the clôtüre it does seem to move as the harvest moon moves in a landscape)—these things are perhaps true. But look at the fourth line. "In calm repose." What has this to do with the question? Whether the sun goes down in calm repose with a legion of clouds in court attendance on him, or whether he sinks with fiery war-signals of a coming storm, or whether he retreats with banners furled in blood—it is all the same to the interior of Chartres Cathedral. The effect does not at all depend upon storm or calm, but upon the angle of incidence of light, and the position of the sun, low in the western horizon. Why does not the sentence end where the sense ends "And the great orb goes down"? Because of the exigencies of the verse. And if so I



greatly fear that something more than sunlight has been made to float in through the windows—that at least one Hobgoblin has crept in unawares.

Now I will not raise the question "What is Truth?"—a question too often asked by those who are about to crucify it. In Art the difficulty does not present itself in the abstract form but in the concrete. Strike out therefore the offending line. Eliminate from the sonnet not only the convicted Hobgoblin, but everything that will not bear analysis, and compare the residuum with the sketch and with the measured outline. We have seen that these three are translations from the same original, and yet they tell different stories; or rather they tell different parts of the same story. But observe, *that which the one tells the others cannot tell.* They are not repetitions, but complements. The Truth which is *expressed* in one is *latent* in the others. Neither in the picture nor in the measured details do we see the slow darkening of the vaulted arches, the dying out of the crimson from the windows, or the growing of the pale light upon the *chemin de la croix*. Yet it is all there. For, were the cathedral itself to dissolve, and "like an unsubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind" such drawings as these would suffice to rebuild it, so that the pale light should grow, the crimson go and come in the windows, and the great rose drift once more through the vaulted darkness. And then as to

the poem. It does not indeed define the length and breadth and height, or describe the actual forms that go to make up the fabric of a Gothic church. Yet all these are latent in it. For it does actually suggest conceivable shapes to which the fancy clings, just as the drawings suggest conceivable thoughts which cling to their visible shapes. If it fails to do this it is not a poem at all, but a Hobgoblin.

These are not subtle distinctions that concern the Critic or the Artist alone. They do indeed control the Artist in his work, and teach the Critic how to use his scalpel, but it is only by a thorough realization of them that any of us can discriminate in Art between the fanciful and the fantastic, between the legitimate action of the Drama and mere *fantoccini*, between real flesh and blood and Hobgoblins. Nothing is more certain, nor indeed more readily admitted, than that the Artist's choice of subjects must be governed by the material in which he works. Yet nothing is more common than to see the Painter or the Sculptor fail in the attempt to tell some story that could be told only by the Poet; or to see the Poet falling into merely descriptive verse. Descriptive verse is not Poetry. If Wordsworth had only *described* Nature he would have been like the Chaldeans and soothsayers, who saw indeed the handwriting upon the wall, but could not tell the meaning of the strange words "MENE, MENE." The true Prophet

alone could both read and interpret. And it is not by virtue of his knowledge in describing, but by his insight in interpreting, that Wordsworth has become to us the High Priest of Nature. Once more—to put it in a concrete form—it is better for the Poet to be content with “a forest of tall pillars” than to specify that there were sixty-two, and that they were thirty-one feet six inches in height, and eight feet in diameter. It is better for the Sculptor, if he would translate the play of Hamlet into marble, to be content with the Prince of Denmark, or with Ophelia, and to leave the ghost alone.

And yet the poem should act upon the mind as would the accumulated splendour of massive masonry chiselled into fine shapes, and windows hung with colours of ruby and amethyst and sapphire. And the ghost, if it is to appear at all, should be seen in Hamlet's eyes.

See, then, how the circle narrows around us. Can the Sculptor show us the ghost in Hamlet's eyes? Is it within the limits of his art to define passion so very closely—or to express in any equivalent the many elements that go to make up the most complex of Shakespeare's characters. I do not affirm that he cannot. I say only that *if he cannot*, he must leave Hamlet to the Painter. He has no right to turn the finest conception of the greatest dramatist into a Hobgoblin.

There is no doubt, however, that the Painter can do it. I do not mean that he can turn Hamlet into a Hob-



goblin; *that* he *has* done many a time: anyone can do that. I mean that although he also stands within a magic circle, the circle is wider, and the wand that traces it is less explicit in its demarcation. Yet the circle exists—and if he oversteps it but for an instant, the charm with which he works will be broken. He will be no more “translated.” He may call as he likes for Cobweb and Moth and Peasblossom, but there will be only Snout the tinker, and Flute the bellows-mender, and Peter Quince, to answer him.

It is only quite recently, however, that this truth has been recognized. I need scarcely refer to the quaint symbols of Mediæval Art, in which Divine things are represented under forms neither Divine nor human. That is a long while ago. But it is little more than a generation since our most sacred books were embellished with pictures very wonderful to behold. I have lying before me now, the frontispiece to one of the most learned of our commentaries. It is a series of illustrations of the most sublime figures of the Apocalypse. He who cometh with clouds, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who holds in His right hand the seven stars, and whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength, at the sight of whom even the beloved disciple, who had lain in His bosom, fell as dead,—He is represented—nay, rather is caricatured—in a style that if not profane would be absurd. Does the written sub-

stance of the commentary stand in anything like the same relation to the sacred text? It is to be hoped not, or the readers of it will gather strange notions about their God. But that is another question, for other men to answer. From these strange notions about Art we have clean escaped.

Casting aside therefore such subjects as are manifestly beyond the reach of the Painter's art, let us consider for a moment an instance that may fairly give rise to difference of opinion.

Everyone knows the beautiful story of Atalanta. Her loveliness, her chastity, her severity—due perhaps to her mother the bear. And then the dart which she carried, her swiftness in running, and the many lovers slain by her hand. If anything is certain, it is certain that this story can be told in verse with a movement and grace to be measured only by the genius of the Poet who makes it his theme. But can the Painter tell it? Observe, the difficulty that presents itself is not the action of stooping. Atalanta might stoop to tie her sandal, Diana to kiss Endymion, the Good Samaritan to pour in oil and wine, the Master to write with His finger upon the ground. In all these instances the action of stooping is well within the limit of the Painter's art. Nor, again, does the difficulty lie altogether in the representation of motion. The movement of the runner may indeed be swifter than that of the girl, the impetus

of whose action is for a moment arrested by a counter-action so violent as that of reaching to the ground ; and yet the mind accepts without question the action of running as a legitimate subject for pictorial representation. The difficulty seems to lie in this—that while in the one case the movement is a continual repetition of the same form in almost perpetual sequence, in the other case it is a sudden and momentary impulse that flashes upon the sight for an instant and then passes away for ever.

Suppose, however, that the attempt is made—is made with magnificent daring and scholarly grace. And suppose that it fails. Will the picture be one more Hobgoblin added to the world? By no means—if the failure be not that of the Artist, but of Art. In days like these, when men are content to go on for ever painting endless variations upon a broken-down pigstye, or a gutter, or a ragged coat, such a failure as this would be worth all the triumphs of a less ambitious pencil. It would be simply a translation from one language into another, in which words are not found to express the full meaning of the original. It would be like the stammering speech of one who if we bent down to listen would be found to be breathing upon us a blessing.

But the real, the genuine, the unblushing Hobgoblin is a thing very different from this. It is not the outcome

of a daring effort to express a thought too great for utterance, or the result of an earnest attempt to depict a form too lovely for the pencil to trace out. It is generally self-evolved from a spasmodic and weak brain, and bears no resemblance to anything in heaven or earth. But when the brain is too weak even for this, the true Hobgoblin is modestly content to take the form of an interpolation of some puerile fancy into a great original, or to sit enshrined in the defilement of some foolish amplification.

One of the sweetest passages in the "Idylls of the King"—sweet, and yet strong with the Beauty of Truth—is that where Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat, guards the shield of Lancelot:—

"Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray  
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam ;  
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it  
A case of silk, and braided thereupon  
All the devices blazon'd on the shield  
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,  
A border fantasy of branch and flower,  
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.  
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,  
[She] climb'd  
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,  
Strip'd off the case and read the naked shield."

Thus in a few simple words the Laureate tells the story. But now it is the Painter's turn. He must make a picture of it. And see what he does. The shield is of steel inlaid with other metals: at any rate it is



polished, or Elaine would not have feared rust. Of course, therefore, it will reflect as would a mirror. Equally of course, if Elaine looks at it she will see herself reflected in it. What a pretty thought! Accordingly the painter represents a beautiful girl gazing at a shield, upon the surface of which is seen her reflection.

But turn to the poem itself. Nothing is said there about the Lily Maid seeing her own face in the shield. She does, indeed, gaze at it, but what she sees is not herself, it is Lancelot. She "guesses a hidden meaning in his arms." She "makes a history to herself":—

"Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,  
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,  
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;  
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;  
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:  
And ah God's mercy what a stroke was there!  
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God  
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,  
And saved him."

What place is there here for the thought of a looking-glass? The Poet would as soon have included that idea as Elaine would have used the shield just to curl her hair by. This is no Narcissus at the stream, or Eve at the fountain, admiring her own beauty. But then in painting it is so easy to represent a polished surface. And of course the surface *was* polished. Yes! But it was also convex; and the laws of Nature are inexor-

able. If any of my fair readers desires to see what the reflection of a beautiful face becomes in a curved surface, she has only to look at herself in the bowl of a spoon. Had Elaine looked *past* the cuts and dints for the reflection of her face, however beautiful she may have been, she could only have beheld a Hobgoblin.

I said at first that definitions should come but slowly ; it is by no means my intention, however, to shirk them altogether. If in these pages the Hobgoblins seem to have come upon us a little suddenly, they have in so doing only followed their natural bent. They always do come suddenly and unawares ; they never are invited ; they bring no introduction ; they never are welcomed ; until they have established themselves they are not even recognized. But one day the Poet or the Painter wakes up. He finds that he has been not only sleeping, but dreaming—dreaming of the Higher Life in Art—dreaming of it instead of living it. And when he looks round upon his work, lo ! it is full of Hobgoblins.

In the next chapter will be found a somewhat fuller account of their natural history.



## VI.

### *THE WARS OF THE HOBGOBLINS.*

THERE are so many of them! I suppose the family of the Hobgoblins is one of the most numerous in existence.

They come crowding round me, even as I begin to write, hiding your faces from me. One is telling me that in my love of things beautiful, I over-estimate the value of Poetry and Art, while the world sees with clearer eyes. Another is urging that the subject itself, The Higher Life in Art, is too high, too noble, for me to dare to touch within the limits of these pages. And yet another suggests that between the cares of the day and the pleasant hours of evening rest filled with the laughing voices of our children, there is but little time for earnest and grave thought.

Hobgoblins! all of them! and thus do I dismiss them.

The Beauty of Truth—the splendour of Truth—the glory of Truth—for that is still my theme, and the Hob-

goblins are only an interlude—the subject is indeed noble ; but it is therefore the more worthy of our consideration. And, moreover, it is a subject not so new or strange but that I may rely upon your love of it rather than on my own skill to make it interesting. It is for your eyes to see, not mine ; and if, as in the turning of a kaleidoscope, things beautiful are made to take new forms, I shall not measure my success by laughter, though laughter has its own beauty and splendour and glory too.

But these Hobgoblins ; they are not only an extensive family, they are also of very ancient pedigree. If antiquity can make a family respectable, then the Hobgoblins are eminently so. And besides this, they are of an almost infinite variety. There are the Black Hobgoblins and the White Hobgoblins, like their Black and White cousins in the family of man. There are big, blundering, foolish Hobgoblins ; and there are Hobgoblins ridiculously small, and impudent in proportion. There are Hobgoblins of the Fire and Brimstone sort, that would frighten timid souls from the right path ; and there are pacific little hop-o'-my-thumb Hobgoblins, that would laugh one out of remembering that there is any particular path we ought to tread.

And yet multitudinous as they are, and infinite in their varieties, there are certain characteristics common to

them all. From the Hobgoblin we used to make when we were children—a turnip hollowed out, with a lighted candle inside, and holes slashed in for eyes and nose and mouth—to the last Hobgoblin that has startled the political or religious world—they are all ugly, and they are all false.

Ugly—because they are neither of God's making, nor are they reverent representations of His works. And false—because, in pretending to be what they are not, they violate the eternal principles of Truth.

It is not, however, with the Hobgoblins of Theology, of Politics, or of Society that I have to deal, but only with that branch of the family which peculiarly affects the Borderland that lies between Dreamland and the stern realities of life—between the splendour of the lost Paradise, still guarded by the flaming sword, and the fields which we must till for our daily bread. This Borderland it is that we call Poetry and Art. And we may enter it with many different guides. We may enter it with Homer, and see the heroic courage of manhood, the tender affection of womanhood. We may enter it with Dante, and see visions—of terror almost inconceivable or of pathos and sweetness ineffable. We may go with Shakespeare, and measure the greatness and depth of human passion—with Milton, and witness the array of battle and the Captain of the

Lord's Host—with Raphael, and we shall look into the faces of the saints of God—with Turner, and we shall see skies of purple and gold, whose sunsets shall make us dream of the golden gates of Heaven. This is Poetry and Art in the Beauty of Truth. But within this Borderland are also distorted visions, inflated heroics, sentimental affectations, soft nothings—and these things I can only characterize as "Hobgoblins."

I speak of the Beauty of Truth, rather than of Beauty and Truth, because I believe the one to be an attribute rather than a co-ordinate of the other. Whether this be so or not, however, in the wars of the Hobgoblins against the Higher Life in Art, Beauty and Truth are always to be found on the same side. As opposing forces to all that is ugly or false they are ancillary each to the other. See how much is contained in the word Beauty. First, that which gives pleasure to the eye ; second, that which pleases the mind. Synthetically, order—symmetry—elegance—grace—excellence—peace—holiness. See also the fulness of the word Truth. First, exact accordance with fact ; second, conformity of words to thoughts, veracity. Synthetically, correct opinion—fidelity—sincerity—virtue. And observe how the two words draw together in their meaning—the one leading through order, symmetry, grace, excellence, to Holiness—which is Virtue ; the other leading through accuracy, veracity, fidelity, to Virtue—which is Holiness.



And yet there may be false conceptions about Truth, and ugly ideas about Beauty.

"What I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals on Facts. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, described as no one, perhaps, but Charles Dickens could have described it. And Mr. Gradgrind was addressing the schoolmaster, who was distinguished by a name that no one, perhaps, but Charles Dickens could have invented—Mr. M'Choakumchild. And the children, an inclined plane of little vessels, were then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they should be full to the brim. As to Mr. Gradgrind, he was certainly a solemn fact himself. "His very neckcloth was trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, and the shining surface of his head was covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if it had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside."

"Girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger,—"I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?"

"Sissy Jupe, sir," explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtseying.



"Sissy is not a name," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia."

"It's father as calls me Sissy, sir," returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsy.

"Then he has no business to do it," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Tell him he mustn't."

This is only a preliminary skirmish, or the putting on of war-paint.

"Girl number twenty, give me your definition of a horse."

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours."

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus—and much more—Bitzer.

This is a *reconnaissance en force*—well directed—against our very centre. For if Bitzer's account of the horse is *the Truth*, that "commonest of animals" may be of interest to the naturalist, or to the veterinary surgeon, or to the cab-driver, but he will never trouble the dreams of the artist. The force of the attack lies in this—that Truth itself may be made to appear error by being taken piecemeal. Bitzer was right so far as he went, and his "much more" might have included the naming of hydrogen, and carbon, and iron, and phosphorus, in such and such proportions, without approaching to the fulness

of truth so long as in his account of a living thing he forgot to reckon the life itself.

For see what a splendour there is in life—even animal life. I do not say that Bitzer would have done better by quoting from the book of Job, but there is more to be said of the horse than that he is graminivorous, or that he has twenty-four grinders. "He paweth the valley and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." But these are the words of Him "who gave to the horse strength and clothed his neck with thunder." And this is Poetry. Yes—but it is also the beauty and splendour and glory of Truth.

"Now," said Mr. Gradgrind, "you all know what a horse is. Tell me, would you paper a room with representations of horses?"

After a pause, one half of the children cried in chorus, "Yes, sir!" Upon which the other half, seeing in the gentleman's face that Yes was wrong, cried out in chorus, "No, sir!"

"Of course, No. Why wouldn't you?"

A pause. One corpulent slow boy, with a wheezy manner of breathing, ventured the answer, Because he wouldn't paper the room at all, but would paint it.

"You *must* paper it," said the gentleman rather warmly; "you

*must* paper it, whether you like it or not. Don't tell me you wouldn't paper it. What do you mean, boy?"

Another dismal pause.

"I'll explain to you, then, why you wouldn't paper a room with representations of horses. Do you ever see horses walking up and down the sides of a room in reality—in fact?"

"Yes, sir!" from one half. "No, sir!" from the other.

"Of course, No," said the gentleman, with an indignant look at the wrong half. "Now, I'll try you again. Suppose you were going to carpet a room. Would you use a carpet that had representations of flowers upon it?"

There being a general conviction by this time that "No, sir!" was the right answer to this gentleman, the chorus of No was very strong. Only a few stragglers said Yes; among them Sissy Jupe.

"Girl number twenty," said the gentleman, smiling in the calm strength of knowledge.

Sissy blushed and stood up.

"So you would carpet your room—or your husband's room, if you were a grown woman and had a husband—with representations of flowers, would you?" said the gentleman. "Why would you?"

"If you please, sir, I am very fond of flowers," returned the girl.

"And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?"

"It wouldn't hurt them, sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy——"

"Ay, ay, ay! But you mustn't fancy," cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to his point. "That's it; you are never to fancy."

This is war along the whole line—the Hobgoblins, not only against Beauty and Truth, but against Poetry and Art in their every form. But it is a war that has been long ago fought out, and of which the issue was never doubtful. The very end and aim of Poetry and Art is to exorcise such Hobgoblins as these. The very end



and aim of Poetry and Art is so to cultivate the imagination that everything shall have to us not only its outward form of Beauty but its inner life of Truth—the Beauty to fill our eyes with gladness, the Truth to make us strong of heart.

In warfare, however, it is not always a direct assault that is the most dangerous; a greater peril is found sometimes to lie in the *vis inertiae* of our own forces when they should be swift to move. And in the wars of the Hobgoblins this is especially the case. There can be no doubt as to the position taken up by Mr. Gradgrind. His attack is direct, and along the whole line. There is no attempt even to outflank us by a side issue. His Hobgoblins come straight at us, and if they overcome us we need talk no more about the Higher Life in Art, for Art will have ceased to exist. Such assaults have often been made and always with the same result—the satire of a Dickens, or the fancy of a Sissy “who will be a grown woman one day and have a husband” and in the meantime is “very fond of flowers,” is sufficient to defeat them utterly.

But the *vis inertiae* of which I speak is a much more serious matter. It is a defect on our own side, and the Hobgoblins know quite well how to use it to their own advantage. It is the resistance of matter to motion—it is the resistance of motion to change or rest. It is

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custom, it is tradition, it is habit, it is fashion, it is prescription, it is precedent, it is anything and everything that a Hobgoblin can seize hold of to keep us steadily in a wrong course or to hinder us from starting in a right one. We cannot fire a shot at the enemy because our guns are so heavy that we cannot load them. We *must* fire, because our guns *are* loaded, though they are pointed against our friends. When it comes to this there is strong reason to believe that our position has been turned, and that our guns are being served by Hobgoblins. And that it does come to this sometimes will, I think, be sufficiently evidenced by the three stories I have now to tell.



## VII.

### *SEEN THROUGH A CLOUD; A STORY OF REAL LIFE.*

A THRILL of pleasure has just passed through the studios of London, for the morning papers have announced that a great painter is dead.

And yet this man, who has just laid down his palette for the last time, and for the last time has looked into his painting-room, was good as well as great; was much loved as well as much admired. When a student, he was the favourite in the schools. While still a young painter, he was the one for whom everybody predicted, and desired, success. To his friends he was warm-hearted and true. He was loyal to the interests of the Society of which he was a member, and clear-sighted in council. As a judge he was both generous and just. Young aspirants who needed encouragement found it in him. Many who were hard pressed in the race and ready to fall out of the ranks, were strengthened by his friendly hand. If any fell by the way, there would be no scorn in his eyes as he bent over them to succour or console.

But now the house—that used to be bright with the faces of many friends—is quite dark; dark days, however, shall trouble him no more; and the children for a little while have ceased playing; and some one—I cannot quite see who it is, but her eyes are red with weeping—has crept into the room where the dead painter lies asleep; and through the white cloud that curls up from our cigars we see in each other's faces the question, before it is asked—Who will be the next Academician?

I know that it is useless to strive against the inevitable, and much of all this is inevitable. Succession appears to be the first law of our being. What is the prince waiting for, except that the king his father may die? The young marquis waits—to change his four strawberry leaves for eight. The young earl waits—to change his eight strawberry leaves for four. Frank Hazeldean waits—his *post obit* is waste paper until the old man has played his last rubber of whist with Parson Dale. And Wal'r and Florence must possess their souls in patience if they have an eye to Captain Cuttle's watch.

And *if this is inevitable*, let us accept our position and make the best of it. But do not let us add voluntarily to the evil, nor be content even to bear with it, when the remedy is in our own hands. In this case the remedy is simple in the extreme; it is easily applied; and it

would be effectual. That the number of the Academicians must be limited is evident, if the honour is to be of any value. Honours distributed broadcast are no more honourable; or are precious in inverse proportion to the numbers who attain them. But the limit should be in the number who do attain them, rather than in the number who are permitted to be alive at the same time. Let it be estimated how many elections would be required each year to maintain the number of the Academicians. Let there be no hard and fast number, such as forty, any more than there is a hard and fast number of Wranglers at Cambridge, or of Double-Firsts at Oxford. Let the elections take place annually, during the time of the exhibition, when the public generally, and artists particularly, can see the justification as well as trust the wisdom of the choice made. The average may require that two shall be elected one year, and three the next; that is easily arranged. The gain will be: 1st. That the elections will no more be hap-hazard—through sudden vacancies occurring when, perhaps, there is a weak candidature, or long periods intervening just when the candidature is strongest—but will be regular, as the times are regular for winning honours at the universities; and being so, the preparation of those who elect as well as those who compete will be more thoughtful and complete. 2nd. That the laurel crown for which the artist strives

will always be wreathed, ready for him to win. 3rd. That if he wins it, he will win it in the light of day. 4th. That he will wear it with no fear lest one day it should become to him a crown of thorns. 5th. That when the winter is past, and the hawthorn is again bright in the hedges, and the summer is coming fast upon us—for it is May ; when the young painter's heart beats high with hope, for his work is well-placed, and the smiles of happy friends tell him that he has done well ; when the evenings are yet chill, and the days not so short but that he can afford to muse a little in the twilight ; then, when the cigar—which *is* inevitable—comes out once more, the faces that he sees through its pale incense, need not, to make him happy, be the faces of the dead.

To these considerations may not still a sixth be added, namely—that there will be one Hobgoblin the less to tempt, or deceive, or assail those who are striving after the Higher Life in Art.

## VIII.

### *BEFORE THE COUNCIL: A STORY OF ADVENTURE.*

AN amusing incident, well worth recording, has just occurred in a village on the outskirts of London. The parish is a large one, and very populous, so that it is customary in our church, when the minister says "Here endeth the second lesson," for the congregation to arrange themselves still a little more comfortably in their seats, in anticipation of hearing a long list of candidates for the "holy estate of matrimony." On this occasion, however, our little world was startled from its usual placidity. The curate read indeed the banns, *but for one couple only*, and then after duly closing with the exhortation, he passed to the order of the day. What could this mean? Had every Phillis turned refractory, or every Corydon proved faithless? Not so; the explanation was much more simple than that. The curate had read the banns for himself and his beloved, and then, absorbed in the contemplation of his own happiness, or being a little absent-minded, he honestly forgot the rest.



Now I do not say that an ecclesiastical Hobgoblin had anything to do with this little episode; my subject is Art, and I know nothing of clerical demonology. I simply record it as something which may explain what often seems inexplicable to many artists, in some of the sharpest, as well as commonest disappointments of their lives. *They* have their little love affairs—with the public—and they desire above all things that no impediment shall stand in their way. They entrust their pictures to the tender mercy of a hanging committee, as the simple villagers render their names to the parson. And then—but suppose the parson himself has a little business on his own account, is it not possible that theirs may take a second place in his mind? Suppose that every member of the hanging committee is himself striving—striving nobly—for fame. Absorbed in the pursuit of his own vision of what is beautiful in Nature and Art, he also has his life to live and his race to run; if he is ahead of others in the race, that means only that with him the running is more swift. It needs no harsh construction to account for many an apparent injustice or oversight. I, perhaps, have been spending a year of my life in working out what seems to me a noble thought. He, who will have to judge my work, has been spending his life—a better life than mine—in working just the other way. Is it wrong of him that he does not, the moment my picture comes before him, possess himself

of my spirit, and see with my eyes? The error he makes, if it is an error, is an error inherent in the finite. There is nothing in it for me to resent, nothing even for me to blame.

And yet while this is true, we do well to remember that these disappointments are not only very keen, and very common, but very serious also. The curate, so soon as his own honeymoon is over, may find leisure to think once more of Corydon and Phillis, and they may be happy too. As a matter of fact he did not wait so long, the banns omitted in the reading-desk were proclaimed a few minutes later in the chancel. And at the worst such a mishap could only be occasional, since the curate does not publish his own banns annually. *But the Academicians have every year the same difficulty recurring: of being judges in a contest in which they are themselves competitors.* Everything, therefore, that gives them a better chance of judging righteously must be worth consideration. Probably no exhibition has ever yet been hung without the unfortunate exclusion of some true work of art. Certainly the one hundred and ten seasons of the Royal Academy have been one hundred and ten chapters of a story of suffering, not yet completed, that would startle many of us if we could only read them. So long as ruined hopes and wasted lives mark the path of our great Juggernaut of Art, it is the duty of everyone, whether painter or writer,

within the Academy or without, to strive to do something to lessen the evil. Let one, therefore, who has himself no grievance or discourtesy to complain of, and who is yet intimately acquainted with the elements of the question, venture to make one or two practical suggestions.

The evils, and the remedies suggested may be briefly stated.

(1). The enormous number of works from which selection has to be made. Last season there were said to have been 8000 paintings sent in. Until the selection is made, the hanging cannot so much as begin. Suppose the committee to have sat for a whole week, eight hours each day. The result would have been that each work must have been placed before them, examined, voted upon, and its fate sealed, in the average time of twenty seconds. The tendency of this high pressure, is not only to produce individual cases of injustice, but also to distinctly lower the standard of English Art. It is a well-known fact, that the very greatest works of art do not, as a rule, make their full impression upon the mind at a first glance. A picture of the highest order therefore—one, that is, in which the gradations of tone are almost infinitely subtle, is robbed of its best qualities by being rapidly passed before the eyes, in an oblique position, scarcely held stationary for a moment by the



carpenters who carry it, and pitched forward or backward, perhaps, in a false or harsh light. If a thousand Hobgoblins danced before the eyes of the Council, the task of judgment could scarcely be made more difficult or uncertain.

Now although it is understood that there is a limit to the number of works that may be exhibited by any one artist, there is practically no limit to the number he may submit for exhibition; and it is customary for men to send a large number, in the hope that one may be hung if another is rejected. A stop should be put to this at once. Why should the Academicians sit in council to consider which of half-a-dozen works by a painter would represent him best? Let the painter do that for himself in his own studio, and send the *two* works upon which he would build his reputation. As to the Academicians, there is no necessity for any fresh rule. With them, as representatives of English Art, it is not simply a privilege, or a right—it is a duty—to place before the public their chief works. But it is neither the duty nor the right of every artist to exhibit every picture he paints. Let instructions be given that under no circumstances shall more than two works, of the same class, be received from any one artist not being an Academician. This alone would sift the 8000 to less than half that number, and the difficulty of selection would be lessened in proportion. But it would

do more than that ; it would remove some of the most serious evils incident to the present system, namely :—

(2). The great inequality in the justice distributed to artists. It is not at all uncommon at present, to find that one painter has five or six canvases hung, while another, who is known throughout the profession to be at least his equal, has only a letter to say that "the Council regret that want of space prevents his picture obtaining a place." If the rule I suggest had been in force last year, there would have been room for 180 more pictures by artists whose works were rejected solely on the ground of insufficient space.

(3). The great uncertainty of reward with which an artist works. For ten or twenty years his pictures may have been favourably received, until he has begun to feel that he has fairly earned a recognized position in the Art-world. Then suddenly, with no reason assigned, with no explanation offered, they are cast out altogether, and he receives a blow which few men are able to bear without staggering under it. At the same time another painter, sending perhaps almost for the first time, is astonished to find everything hung that he has sent. Elated with his unlooked-for success, he also feels that his position is made. Friends crowd round him, generously eager to see what their young genius is



doing. It seems a long time to wait—till next year—but the time does come at last; and then—why then, and for many a year afterwards, his pictures are found to be uniformly rejected, and as much attention is drawn to his failure as was at first directed to his success—a success which will have left an injury behind, from which recovery is slow and difficult.

I would very earnestly suggest that a list should be prepared annually of those artists who, for a certain number of years (say five or seven years) have sent works worthy of being placed; and that all the works contributed by those artists should be examined by the Council apart from the rest, with the knowledge of the claim they have to consideration, and with the understanding that they should not be rejected except after grave and special deliberation, and by a vote nearly approaching to unanimity.

I need scarcely add that I do not press these suggestions as being perfect in all their details. They find a place here because criticism should not be destructive only. The Royal Academy is quite competent and may be trusted to amend its rules when necessary. But in treating of these typical hindrances to the Higher Life in Art it is not sufficient for me to have arraigned a Hobgoblin and to leave it to be dealt with by the authorities. I must show that it is a Hobgoblin, and

that it is possible to deal with it effectually. There is no parallel in any other profession to this terrible uncertainty to which artists are subjected. The barrister may have to wait long for his brief—the physician for his practice—the soldier for his promotion—the curate for his preferment—*but they are not brought up annually for examination with the chance of forfeiting the honour they have already won, and being proclaimed dunces because the examiners are pressed for time.* Some of our young painters, buoyant with hope and of good courage, may not know how great the strain will become; some of our veterans may have schooled themselves into indifference; nevertheless the system is eating the strength out of the work done year by year in England. I am not now pleading for artists: I am pleading for Art. Originality of style or independence of thought are scarcely possible to those whose success depends on the suffrages of an average committee. To be in advance of the age, as was David Cox, or to dare to think for oneself, as does Woolmer, is of necessity to be driven out or to be classed as eccentric. The true remedy would be for every artist, besides sending to the Royal Academy, to become a working member of some lesser society—a society not antagonistic but supplementary to the Academy—where he should have the right to exhibit, even though he ventured to do something that his fellows might not quite understand; where he could

appeal to the Art-world and to the public without considering whether his works would attract the instant attention and win the immediate approbation of a hanging committee; and where (if by mischance he was unfavourably treated in another place) his pictures, well placed upon the line, would be witnesses, at least to all who can discern, on his behalf.

But this opens out another and a wider question. In the meantime I am quite sure that if these simple suggestions were carried out they would bring happiness to the minds and courage to the hearts and firmness to the hands of many of our artists—who now work with anxiety and hesitation—and that in doing this they would go far to strengthen and raise our English school.

## IX.

### *DRIFTING; THE STORY OF A DADO.*

HOW could it have entered into the mind of anybody, at any time, under any circumstances, to imagine that a Hobgoblin could lurk hidden in a dado?

Shakespeare, indeed, conjures up many a fantastic trick of Robin Goodfellow—

“He  
That frights the maidens of the villagery,”

and jests to Oberon—but whatever form that mischievous Hobgoblin takes, from a “filly foal” to a “three-legged stool,” there is some life and movement in it. But a dado!—It is such an innocent thing. See it, as it lies quietly against the wall at Burlington House, taking upon itself nothing more than to be a gentle amplification of a skirting-board; content to be unseen; content to be brushed during the season by the dresses of many thousands of ladies, and then—to be forgotten, even by the few visitors who might by chance have been aware of its existence.

And yet no trick ever played by Master Puck in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"—from the squeezing of the juice of "the little western flower" into Lysander's eyes, to the translation of Bottom—ever led to such momentous issues as did the appearance of the real dado of which I would tell the story. It has simply revolutionized the school of English painting.

The intelligent foreigner is, indeed, fond of telling us that we have no school at all, but only an aggregation of individual fancies. As I am not at this moment, however, concerned with foreign opinion, but only with a very serious matter affecting the interests of my own countrymen, I will tell my story my own way, and will assume that the *drift*, or general direction that Art takes, in England, has some of the distinctive characteristics of what may be called a school. This drift, I say, has changed. I do not say whether for the better or the worse, but it has changed, and the change dates from the dado, and the dado is the cause of the change.

Consider for a moment the circumstances under which the dado made its appearance, and what it displaced. The custom of the Royal Academy, for nearly a century, had been to hang the chief works upon what is called *the line*, to fill the vacant spaces under the line with comparatively choice pictures of a cabinet size, and to relegate to the higher regions of wall-space such



paintings as had no special claim to be brought near to the eye for close inspection. The very first result, therefore, of the introduction of the dado, was the forfeiture of space for at least one row of cabinet pictures from end to end of the exhibition. And what did this mean? There were, no doubt, many disadvantages arising from the old arrangement. Small pictures were often lost amongst the voluminous folds of many dresses, like violets hiding from the sun. Many backs ached with bending to discover little gems upon the floor; and perhaps a frame or two might have been damaged. But still the thing worked tolerably well; the gems could be picked up; the violets could be gathered; and the frames could be retouched with gold. Moreover—and this is the point to which my story is addressed—there was a very strong inducement for the painter to put all the good work of which he was capable upon canvases of very modest dimensions. For men like Mulready, Bonington, Wilkie, Lewis, and many others, whose works cannot be fairly judged at a great distance from the eye, there would have been no chance at all if their pictures had been placed at first as high from the floor as the sky-sail of a frigate from the deck, and had remained there until they won their way to the favour of a discerning public. For, let it be noted, the hanging of a good picture in a bad place, always seems to justify itself. A picture

painted for close inspection and relying on reticence of expression and subtle gradation of tone, will always run the chance of looking weak when placed high up above the line. It is not simply difficult, it is impossible for its merits to be recognized in such a case. But the same picture placed *under* the line, however near the ground, can, with a little trouble, at least be seen, and if it has merit may win its way, and in time rise to its true level. The dado, however, came—and to make room for it three or four hundred cabinet pictures were swept away. And with what result? Will three or four hundred painters be content to be quietly effaced? Not if they are Englishmen. Their pictures may sink down to the cellars, or rise to the coving of the ceiling, but the painters will paint on to the bitter end; and if they find that the only approach to the public eye is from a distant height, they will so paint that from a distant height they shall be seen. Whether this system is good for the painter or for the public—whether it is not on the side of the Hobgoblins and against the Higher Life—whether, if you cannot get near enough to a man to talk to him in a natural voice, it is well to attempt to converse with him by shouting—are questions which, for the moment, I do not attempt to answer. I am only making notes of the case. But it will not be out of place to draw attention to one or two matters that will certainly affect the answer ultimately to be given.

Note then first, that the fault of the English school has never been a too great reticence of colour. Anything, therefore, that tends to a greater straining after effect in this direction must be, if not distinctly evil, at least, of doubtful advantage. Consider also the purpose for which the pictures that cover the walls of our exhibitions are painted. They are, for the most part, destined for the walls of our houses, where they will be placed opposite, and very near to the eye. Will the scale of colour and vigorous handling which please when viewed, like the scenes of a theatre, from a distance, afford abiding satisfaction when they become our close and constant companions? Is not the distance from which a picture is to be viewed, indeed, a very important question for the painter's consideration? If Quentin Matsys had painted for the ceilings of the Ducal Palace, and Tintoretto for the homely parlours of northern burghers, should we not have seen a difference in their methods of handling? In *very* old-fashioned houses I have witnessed what must seem to some of us strange scenes. I have heard a guest say to his host, "Ah, you have something new there, I should like to look at it after dinner"—and after dinner accordingly, when the time has come, I have seen a group of two or three, with carefully shaded candle, peering into some small canvas, finding in it some loveliness, or skill, or tenderness, or subtlety of effect that did not cry



out to be admired like brass instruments in a band. When the time has come—the time is past for that sort of thing—the time seems to be coming when our kind host shall be fairly startled at such a request—when, indeed, such a request would be altogether unnecessary, since everybody shall be able to see all that is to be seen without rising from the table, if he will only take the trouble to glance over his left shoulder.

And all this out of a dado? Yes, and much more. For I have spoken so far only of the exaggeration of *force* to which men are driven by the certainty that, failing to obtain a place on the line, their pictures can find no refuge below it. But there is the exaggeration also of *size*. A canvas to be seen at all above the line must be of considerable dimensions; and to make any mark must very often be of much larger proportions than the painter's better judgment would have chosen for his subject; and oftener still proves to be a great deal bigger than he can deal with successfully. For the "largeness" which is "great" in Art is not measured by feet or inches—it is largeness of conception. Some of Meissonier's pictures, a hand's-breadth in size, are more colossal than the mighty canvases of Rubens in the Louvre. But recall any of our recent exhibitions, and think of the acres of painted surfaces they represent. Two yards for a morsel of seaweed; three yards for a

barn or stable; seven feet for the spar of a wrecked ship and half a wave; ten feet for a pony. We are reproached sometimes for a too rapid Americanization of our institutions, and this love of big things is said to be a manifestation of it. If so, it is as vain as it is objectionable; we cannot bring Niagara over to England. People will always dispute, however, about the origin of things. Let them dispute. In this case at any rate it was not the kettle that began it, "neither will *I* be told what Mrs. Peerybingle said. I know better. Mrs. Peerybingle may have left it on record to the end of time, that she couldn't say which of them began it." But I believe it was the dado.

Whether it was the dado, however, or not, the movement has begun, and we are drifting. The utter hopelessness of painting small pictures to be hung in high places, cut us adrift. The necessity for *dash* gave us the impetus; and we now are in waters, broad, if not deep. But shallow waters are not safe. I may be mistaken in my diagnosis of the case. It *may* be well to magnify the scale of our productions, in the hope that the bigger they are the more impression they will make upon the beholder. It *may* be well to paint so that our work will be seen best from a distance through an opera-glass. It *may* be well to substitute great prisms of strongly coloured glass for jewels—which after all are but insignificant little things, and not half



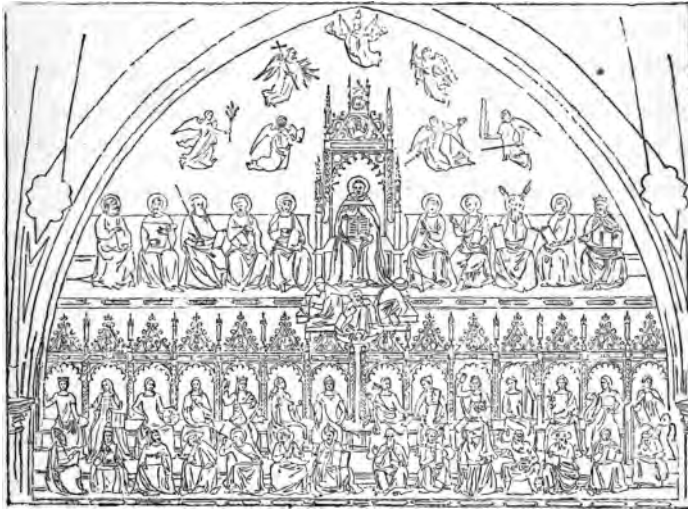
so showy as they should be. But if it is *not* well—if a return to a simpler and more normal scale would be good for us and for Art—the remedy is not far to seek. *Let one or more of the smaller rooms at Burlington House be specially reserved for pictures of choice quality and small size.* The effect would tell beneficially both on the large and the small canvases. It would give an additional charm, a very special attraction, to the exhibitions, advantageous alike to Academicians and to artists generally. It would encourage artists to make an unbiassed choice of the scale upon which they would work, without fear of being driven or enticed to exaggeration either in size or handling. And the dado? Well—that would be a matter for Robin Goodfellow to consider; but at least we may be sure the dado would tell no more stories. What would really happen it is not very difficult to surmise. The “little western flower” would once more come into play: Lysander would no more run after a “painted maypole,” but would be content with Hermia; the dado would remain a dado; and Bottom would be himself again.

X.

*HOBGOBLINS BY THE GREAT MASTERS.*

I. LANCELOT-LICTOR.

**I**N the church of the Dominicans at Florence there is a painting in fresco attributed to Simon Memmi. It fills a lunette in the Spanish chapel, and consists of a series of figures arranged as in the following outline.



Seated upon the great throne in the centre is St.

Thomas Aquinas. He holds in his hand an open book. Hovering around him are seen, against a background of sky, seven angels, bearing various emblems. At his feet are three figures seated on the ground. At each side of him are five figures, also seated. The five on his right are, St. John, St. Mark, St. Paul, David, and Job. The five on his left are, St. Matthew, St. Luke, Moses, Isaiah, and Solomon. "Some," that is, "evangelists, some prophets, some pastors and teachers." So far the interpretation is not doubtful, their names are inscribed upon a band that divides the upper portion of the design from the lower.

The lower portion consists of fourteen divisions closely resembling the stalls of a cathedral choir. In these stalls are figures symbolizing the seven celestial and seven terrestrial Sciences. The design is completed by a medallion in the canopy, and a figure placed in the lower seat of each stall—the medallion illustrating the subject by some characteristic action or incident; the figure beneath representing the person of some famous master. Thus, in one division we have Justice, or Civil Law, holding the globe in her left hand, and the level sword in her right; at her feet is the Emperor Justinian; and in the medallion above is a pleading figure with clasped hands. In another division is Astronomy, her right hand lifted to the heavens, in her left the hollow globe; at her feet is Zoroaster, his eyes intently

fixed upon the stars, his hand ready with note-book and pencil; in the medallion is a reaper with a bent sickle. Under these figures also there is a band, with labels for inscription. But the names appear to have been long ago effaced.

I need scarcely say that very much has been written about this great work. Vasari has of course described it with many comments; guide-books innumerable refer to it. Rumohr, Waagen, Lord Lindsay, Sir Charles Eastlake, and more recently Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have told us everything perhaps that is to be told about it.\* So that however greatly critics may differ in their opinions as to its authorship, or the merits of its design, it may fairly be expected that if a new lance comes into the field, he shall at least know what it is at which, or for which, he proposes to tilt.

A new lance has come into the field—new, that is, to this particular venue—though one well known in the

\* And all of them, from Vasari to the Editors of the last editions of Murray or Bædeker, have told us different stories. One of the latest of these assigns the authorship of these frescos to Simone Martini. I do not assent to this. But to raise the question of their true authorship would be entirely beside my purpose, for which the name of Simon Memmi may stand as well as that of Taddeo Gaddi, or of Andrea da Firenze, to whom also they have been attributed. For information on this subject the reader cannot do better than turn to the elaborate work of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, on the History of Painting in Italy—a work full of careful research and thoughtful criticism.



wars of the Hobgoblins. So well known, indeed, that if he do but move, one shall say to the other—

“Lo!

What is he? I do not mean the force alone,  
The grace and versatility of the man—  
Is it not Lancelot?”

Let us examine for a moment this last utterance on the subject of Simon Memmi's picture. It will be found in a little book entitled “Mornings in Florence: being Simple Studies in Christian Art, for English Travellers.” Mornings in Florence—the book is rightly named; for if English Travellers are animated by the spirit in which it is written, they will not be likely to see much of Florence in the afternoons or evenings—even if their mornings are not brought to an abrupt conclusion. And yet, whether the book is calculated to wound the Florentines or ourselves the more deeply it would be difficult to say. In the very first paragraph we read of the “Devil-begotten brood of modern Florence.” Do these words, from an English Author, fill English Travellers with astonishment? or shame? Perhaps with both feelings. But then, while the shame deepens and is lasting, the amazement is soon over. For nobody who has read so far can be surprised to find on the next page that he is angry with the children—it is too evident that they must be of the same “brood.” “One can never draw in front of a church in these republican days,” he says, “for all the blackguard children of the



neighbourhood come to howl, and throw stones, on the steps, and the ball or stone play is incessant in the fine days." But this is not all; nor is it even the worst. The ball-play may cease—but not the children. If they vanish for a moment it is only to reappear—as choristers. For in *this* Comedy, though there is no Paradiso, there is variety of torment. There is howling and howling. During six months' residence in Italy, says our Author, with the exception of some part-singing in a blacksmith's shop, he has heard only "bestial howling, and entirely frantic vomiting up of hopelessly damned souls through their still carnal throats." So much for the children's voices, whether on the steps of the church, or in the choir. But what of their fathers and mothers? Just this, "You never hear a word uttered but in a rage, either just ready to burst or, for the most part, explosive instantly: everybody—man, woman, or child—roaring out their incontinent, foolish, infinitely contemptible opinions and wills, on every smallest occasion, with flashing eyes, hoarsely shrieking and wasted voices,—insane hope (*sic*) to drag by vociferation whatever they would have "out of man and God." Happy English Travellers—to be preceded by such a Lictor! Still more happy Florence—to submit to such chastisement! But do the Florentines submit? and does not our Lictor carry an unnecessarily thick stick?

For the Florentines I cannot answer. As to our

Author—leaving the children and their parents behind—passing through the quiet cloister, and the church (so lovely in its proportions that Michael Angelo was content to give to it the title of his “bride”)—may he not hope to find sanctuary in the chapel? with Simon Memmi’s great work before him, a note-book in his hand, and many weeks of leisure in which to elaborate his work. There, no one can expect him “to subscribe to Mudie’s,” nor to “patronize Tauchnitz editions.” And yet it is not all peace. He must have recourse to guide-books. He may even find it necessary to refer to an old writer on Art whom he compassionates as “poor Vasari.” But if there is vexation in the modern Italian, surely in the ancient there is madness. Observe the delicacy of the distinction. They *all* blunder—but Vasari’s mistakes, he tells us, are usually of a *brightly* blundering kind.

And still there is one more book of which he must take account, if he would understand the picture before him. And that is the Bible. Of Bibles, however, there are many, and it is certain that if Simon Memmi read the sacred text for himself he must have read it in manuscript and from the Vulgate—at any rate *our* authorized version can have little to do with the question. Nevertheless our Author takes the opportunity of remarking in a note that “*heavenly*” places is, with “cowardly intentional fallacy,” translated “*high*” in the English text.

A task approached in such a spirit as this is sure to be accomplished with vigour, if not with discretion. But Lancelot serving as Lictor is like St. George selling swine,\* or Samson grinding for the Philistines.

Our Author's method is as follows: He describes seriatim the central figure of each Science, together with the medallion over it, and the figure beneath—attributing to each group what he supposes to have been the meaning of the great designer. Thus, of the first—Grammar—because two of the children at her knee are boys and one only is a girl, he argues that only one girl out of every two or three ought to be taught to read or write. And so from Grammar to Rhetoric; and from Rhetoric to Logic; and from Logic to Music; through the long catalogue of these Sciences, he weaves a story, exquisitely told, full of beautiful thoughts strung together like a necklace of pearls—until, suddenly—the thread is snapped and the pearls lie scattered on the floor. But the scattered pearls mean more than the snapping of a thread. They mean that the lance of Lancelot is broken—that St. George has returned to his father's shop—and that Samson is not avenged for his two eyes.

To the sketch already given of Simon Memmi's fresco I now add an outline, on a larger scale, of a portion of the picture which we should do well to examine

\* Neatly labelled *Dracunculus Muriaticus*, or its equivalent.



and compare with our Author's comments. The fragment consists of three figures, which he thus describes :—

"XI. DEVOTIONAL THEOLOGY. Giving glory to God, or, more accurately, whatever feelings He desires us to have towards Him, whether of affection or awe.

"In blue and red : a narrow black rod still traceable in the left hand ; I am not sure of its meaning. ('Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me?') The other hand open in admiration, like Astronomy's ; but Devotion's is held at her breast. Her head very characteristic of Memmi, with upturned eyes, and Arab arch in hair. Under her, Dionysius the Areopagite—mending his pen ! But I am doubtful of Lord Lindsay's identification of this figure, and the action is curiously common and meaningless. It may have meant that meditative theology is essentially a writer, not a preacher.

"XII. DOGMATIC THEOLOGY. After action, and worship, thought becoming too wide and difficult, the need of dogma becomes felt ; the assertion, that is, within limited range, of the things that are to be believed.

"In red,—again the sign of power,—crowned with a black (once golden?) triple crown, emblematic of the Trinity. The left hand holding a scoop for winnowing corn ; the other points upwards. 'Prove all things—hold fast that which is good, or of God.'

"Beneath her, Boethius.

"XIII. MYSTIC THEOLOGY. Monastic science, above dogma, and attaining to new revelation by reaching higher spiritual states.

"In white robes, her left hand gloved (I don't know why)—holding chalice. She wears a nun's veil fastened under her chin, her hair fastened close, like Grammar's, showing her necessary monastic life ; all states of mystic spiritual life involving retreat from much that is allowable in the material and practical world.

"For the rest, the figure is not of any interest, Memmi's own mind being intellectual rather than mystic."

Now, apart from the figures which are thus described, nothing can be more beautiful than this description of

them. But if we take the trouble to turn to the design itself, we shall see that the figure mending his pen is not under Devotional Theology at all. What has our Author



done? *He has just slipped past one of the lower figures, mistaking the twelfth for the eleventh, and then, with the same elegant facility which marks the whole structure of his criticism, he has built up a superstructure that can only be inhabited by Hobgoblins.*



But the Hobgoblins cannot take possession of a strong man's house until the man himself is cast out or at least bound. And Simon Memmi was a strong man. His symbolism is not so hare-brained as to permit the critic to play fast and loose with it in this manner. And the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella were strong men too. If Simon Memmi painted this picture for them, it is quite certain that he must have worked upon lines laid down by them for his guidance. It is not to be supposed that these *Domini canes* would have left the decision of great questions of controversy to the imagination of even the most admired painter. The teaching of this picture may be taken therefore to be the teaching of the Church, rather than of the Studio; and the misinterpretation of it may lead to graver issues than any with which æsthetics can safely deal. Like the black and white dogs, however, which are scattering a pack of wolves in a picture on the other side of the chapel, the Dominicans may be trusted to take care of themselves and of their own teaching. But, limiting our attention to the artistic appropriateness of the attitudes and actions of the figures, see what these modern Hobgoblins must displace before they can take possession of Simon Memmi's picture. Look at the figure which the painter has really placed under Contemplative or Devotional Theology—and which may well be the martyr Boethius, who solaced his long exile

by meditations on the Consolation of Philosophy, and the Mystery of the Trinity. His head rests on his hand, his book is closed (the words of it are in his heart), his thoughts are wrapt in the contemplation of his great theme. How could the subject have been more eloquently expressed? And then, under Dogmatic Theology, follows the figure examining his pen. "To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." The action of seeing to the accuracy of what is to be written by seeing even to the pen which is to write it, is the perfect expression of these words.\*

To our Author, however, all this "is curiously common and meaningless"; and had he been anyone less than the great author of "Modern Painters" he might well have laid down his pen here, or have handed it to Dionysius, who does not seem particularly pleased with the one he

\* Writers have differed as greatly in their identification of these figures as they have with regard to the authorship of the picture itself. The picture, however, does not appear to be so much a Sphinx as a Chameleon. Nobody finds any difficulty in *explaining* it; but only in *describing* it. Every eye sees it as of a different colour. Thus, the three figures on the left of the centre are said by many critics to be Faith, Hope, and Charity. But one critic counts from the left, another from the right—while a third places Faith between Charity and Hope; so that each figure in turn is made out to be the symbol of each particular Grace.

Perhaps the most perplexing statement on the subject is that of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, who describe the mystic penman

eyes so intently. For consider the absurd position in which he has placed not only Dionysius and Simon Memmi, but himself also. Until this moment Mr. Ruskin has treated Simon Memmi as the unique repository of all the excellencies of wisdom and learning. Is it a question of education—Simon Memmi knows all about it, and cautions you against teaching your girls to read, lest they should want you to subscribe to a library, or buy pirated editions of English authors at a foreign book-stall. Is it Rhetoric—then Simon Memmi, himself an Italian, will tell you what none of his countrymen, from Cicero to these Preaching Friars of Florence for whom he painted, ever guessed before, that gesture is

as *Diogenes the Areopagite*. The statement is repeated more than once, and there is no reference to it in the errata, or it might be taken as a printer's variation on an author's text. When Mr. Ruskin declines to name his authority he tells us, frankly, "I shall not say where the original is, because I don't want it to be fingered;"—but Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle are too grave and sincere in their work to violate the Areopagus with intentional mirth. To whom therefore the name of Diogenes is indebted for this posthumous honour is as difficult to determine as it is to surmise to which Diogenes—Cretan or Babylonian, Cynic or Epicurean—it is supposed to belong; or what any of these had to do with Christian Theology; or how any of them became entitled to the nimbus of a saint.

There are, however, one or two points which have not, I think, been commented upon, and yet seem worthy of note. It will be observed that there are *two* figures busy with their pens; the one examining the point with a most intent look, the other actually cutting with a huge knife. Each of these has been claimed for Dionysius the Areopagite. But it is certain that this convert of St. Paul, and tutelary Saint of France, cannot have been placed by churchmen as



utterly useless, and that it is better when speaking in public to place one's arms "akimbo." Or is it Logic—then, says Simon Memmi, young people should speak before they think, should be taught not only grammar, but rhetoric also before they begin to reason. As to Music, Simon Memmi—anticipating Mr. Darwin—has unfolded in it the doctrine of Evolution; showing, "not accidentally, but with most scientific understanding of baboon character, what men must have looked like before they invented harmony." In Astronomy Simon Memmi teaches us that "though it is not unbecoming of us to find out, if we can, that the stars move in ellipses, and so on, yet it is no business of ours." And

the representative of Dogmatic Theology. The writings attributed to him were not even known to the early Fathers, and when they were translated into Latin were received with extreme suspicion. And yet his treatises on the Celestial Hierarchy and on the Mystic Philosophy "almost created," Milman says, "the angel worship of the popular creed, and were the parents of Mystic Theology and the higher Scholasticism." This, then, is the place given to Dionysius the Areopagite, by these Dominicans, namely, under Mystic Theology. But what of the other figure with a pen? Is that also Dionysius? It may be. But if so it is not the Areopagite, nor the Tyrant, nor the Poet, nor the Historian, nor any other Dionysius taken at hap-hazard—but the Saint—who summoned a synod to condemn the heresy of the Sabellians, which, in confounding the persons of the Trinity, impugned the dogmatic authority of the Church. I do not put this forward as anything more than another conjecture as to the colour of the Chameleon, though its probability is somewhat strengthened by the sequence of the figures, and by the circumstance that Sabellius is himself placed as one of the three heretics at the feet of St. Thomas Aquinas.

then, when we have mastered Astronomy, but not till then, we are presented by Simon Memmi with a square, and are told that we may wisely study a little Geometry—but how a knowledge of the first is to be acquired without the second, neither Simon Memmi nor Mr. Ruskin appears to think it necessary to inform us. Finally, so far as the earthly sciences are concerned, Simon Memmi solemnly enforces on our attention the primal law of Arithmetic—namely, that two and two are—four, you observe,—not five.

But that is only half the story. Simon Memmi is equal to much more than the terrestrial Sciences:—

“Hear him but reason in divinity,  
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish  
You would desire that he were made a prelate :  
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,  
You would say, it hath been all-in-all his study :  
Turn him to any cause of policy,  
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose  
Familiar as his garter.”

for—like the Archbishop of Canterbury and the young King—so Mr. Ruskin and this painter. Civil Law, with its level sword, by which he tells us three-quarters of the globe is justly governed—Christian Law, with its figure of a man counting money (one of the “curious evidences of Simon Memmi’s having read the Gospels with a quite clear understanding of their innermost meaning”)—Devotional Theology, and Dogmatic, on such



good terms with each other that the figures typical of them are interchangeable—all these things are duly set forth as the teaching of this great painter, philosopher, and divine, in whose frescos, says Mr. Ruskin, you will find nothing without significance—when, lo! just as we are anticipating the apotheosis of Simon Memmi we come face to face with a Hobgoblin in the shape of Dionysius the Areopagite mending his pen.

But the Hobgoblins have a hard time of it with Mr. Ruskin. They may “howl” at him like Italian children, or chatter like the “Devil-begotten brood of modern Florence,” but when *he* puts on his war-paint nothing can turn him from his way. Leaving Dionysius, therefore, busy with his pen to represent Contemplation, and Boethius with his head resting on his hand to represent Dogmatism, he passes to the consideration of the remaining groups.

The next Science is Mystic Theology; what shall he do for an illustrative figure beneath it? He cannot use Dionysius again. Surely something is wrong! What are all these figures which have nothing to do with each other? Is it the guide-books?—or “poor Vasari” blundering again? It cannot be Vasari this time, for the blundering is anything but bright; nor the guide-books, for they have been long since cast aside with contempt. And yet the figures all seem inex-

trically mixed up together. Alas, poor Simon Memmi! you are found out at last—it is of no use to resist the inevitable, nor is there anything to be said in arrest of judgment—somebody must be at fault, and, as it cannot be the critic, it must be the painter. And so Mr. Ruskin disposes of the remainder of Simon Memmi's wisdom with the remark—"Medallion unintelligible." "Medallion a soldier, but not interesting." And, finally: "For the rest, the figure is not of any interest, Memmi's own mind being intellectual rather than mystic."

Mr. Ruskin does indeed add one more observation, with which he closes the book, namely, that "lunch-time is near." But I do not propose to go into that question.

I am much more concerned with the thought that many will judge me severely for what may seem to them irreverence towards one of the teachers of the world. And yet, what have I done? Mr. Ruskin calls upon us to witness a combat,—and tells us that it is between St. George and the Dragon. I look at it attentively and perceive that it is nothing of the kind—but only Mr. Ruskin himself struggling with a Hobgoblin. I see also that the Hobgoblin gets the best of it. How shall I set forth all this? How otherwise than with perfect freedom of speech shall I express my sense, I will not say of the reverence only, but of the love and gratitude that are due to a great

genius, and at the same time my reprobation of such criticism as this which I have described. It sounds to me like the words of a king who has gone mad upon his throne. But Mr. Ruskin is no Lear; neither need I be afraid to touch him lest he should be hurt. Generous he has been indeed, even to a fault; but he has not given away his strength; he still retains his power to strike. And then "the grace and versatility of the man." If it was said of the great Florentine who visited our country six hundred years ago that he had seen Hell; it may be said of the great Englishman who has just visited Florence that he has seen Nature—seen her even to—

"The mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops  
I' the bottom of a cowslip."

If Mr. Ruskin had seen less, and knew less, and were less strong, I should not have said what I have said. There is no difficulty in finding foolish things written by Art critics so long as men write reviews for the public journals of pictures they have never seen, and of concerts they have never heard, and of books they have never read, relying for their information on an early catalogue, a stray programme, or a table of contents. These things are done every day, and they fill the papers with Hobgoblins. But they are not Hobgoblins by the Great Masters, and so they do not come within my subject. Stains they are on the fair fame of the jour-



nals in which they appear—that is about all that need be said of them. To search for them would be like looking into a dark hole, on a dark night, after a black cat. The game would not be worth the candle. A black spot, to be interesting, must be seen upon the sun.

And these Hobgoblins by the Great Masters are as spots upon the sun; and I claim the right to study them without laying myself open to the charge of creating them, or of lessening the glory of the light that shines upon us. The true purpose of Art criticism is not to make us think with A or with B; it is to make us think; not to colour the light by which we see, but to bring us more light. And this Mr. Ruskin has done and is still doing. He brings light with him; he makes us think; and whether we think with him or not, the thoughts with which he fills our minds are noble, and pure, and good. "Come with me," he says, "and let us fight this Dragon, or worship this God." We go with him; we are strengthened; we are gladdened with his company;—what does it matter if occasionally we find that the Dragons he would slay or the Penates he would have us worship are only Hobgoblins?



## XI.

### *HOBGOBLINS BY THE GREAT MASTERS.*

#### II. PANDORA'S BOX.

AGAIN I say—there are so many of them. They are upon us while we are yet children; before Sissy has time “to be a grown woman and have a husband” she must do battle with them. They come with the cares of the day—which make us impatient of seeming trifles. They come with our hours of rest—which render us indifferent to things of very real moment. Nor is this all. They come between us and the faces of our dead. They drag our pictures before the Council only to dance them before their eyes, so that no just judgment can be formed, thus robbing us of our reward. They take the unexpected form of an architectural decoration to push us from our places. They steal into our journals, in the shape of careless, or ignorant, or base criticism—inflicting wounds which never can be healed, and wrongs for which there can be no redress. And if there is one leader whom we love, and revere, and would obey,

lo! they sit enshrined in his words. Custom, tradition, habit, fashion, prescription, precedent, anything and everything, seems to have its fling at the Higher Life in Art.

*Where there is movement of any kind there must be force. Whether the delicate sails of the light-mill are driven or attracted by the solar ray may be a matter for experimental philosophy—but that they move at all is sufficient evidence that some force is acting upon them.* I do not qualify this statement in the least; I only say that in this case the movement is not Art, nor is the force Nature. It is from first to last the work of the Hobgoblins.

For the very essence of the thing is this—that the Hobgoblins are outside Nature, and in their wars against the Higher Life they war against Art and Nature, which are allies. So long as the alliance lasts the Hobgoblins have no chance. Bitzer may win the prize, but that will not crush out of Sissy's heart the love of flowers, which by the time she is a grown woman may have grown also into the love and knowledge of the Higher Life in Art. Mr. Ruskin may amuse himself, and us, with his account of Dionysius; but Florence and its treasures will be dear to us still. Ungenerous rivalry may weaken the *morale* of the studio; unmerited disappointments may sadden many lives; artists may see their works creep "slowly, slowly, up the wall," like

the sunshine in the Golden Legend, and yet good pictures will be painted. And if not—well, in that case, we must turn to the Poets.

In anticipation of such a necessity let us take down one or two volumes from the shelf. Surely we shall find safety there. Surely an ugly thought or a false statement cannot escape the close scrutiny incident to the nice balancing of words and the delicate finish of versification. And yet, if a Hobgoblin can twist itself into the convolutions of a Dragon, or flatten itself out into a Fresco—may it not also expand into the mighty Epic? or dwindle to the diminutive "Stanza" or the innocent "Lines"? "Lines written after a Walk before Supper." This is precise—and cautious—and, as a rule, precision is *against* the Hobgoblins. It *is* well, also, not to provoke a struggle with Ephialtes. But then, the night-mare is not the kind of Hobgoblin under consideration. "Lines to Delia on observing a Faded Flower in her Hair." This may be precise—but it is anything but cautious. For only see what follows:—"Lines to a Young Ass."

Not from Delia, however, as might have been supposed, in hasty remonstrance, or cruel retaliation; nor are these "Stanzas" and "Lines" made for the occasion. The sonnet on Chartres, with its little Hobgoblin, was indeed written for the place where it appears, but *now* I am quoting solely from standard Poets. These last are

The song is an effusion of that sweet poet L. E. L. :—

“ I brood upon my silent heart,  
As on her nest the dove.”

To “brood as a dove” is to sit. How can one sit upon one’s heart? Surely such a thing could only be done by a Hobgoblin in Poetry.

We make a rush to the piano, and seizing the piece of music hastily close the pages; when lo! from the cover of it there stares us in the face a vision of the human form divine so startling in its proportions that only to look upon it makes our hair stand on end like that of the little dolls in an electrifying machine. It is a Hobgoblin in Art.

But one day in the week we are safe. No! Like the Village Blacksmith *we* go on Sunday to the church—not the grey old church that he went to: ours is a suburban edifice of imposing dimensions. But from the enlarged copy of a pepper-box that does duty as a spire, to the stuccoed pillars which say they are stone but are not, the whole building is a Hobgoblin in Architecture. And then a hymn is sung. The words are holy and beautiful; but by some mysterious and evil law the tune is made to divide them thus:—

“ Come let us take a pil—  
Come let us take a pil—  
Come let us take a pil—grimage to heaven.”

—it is only a Hobgoblin in Music.



These examples are not taken at hap-hazard—nor indeed are they to be regarded as extreme cases—they are typical. They are typical of the violations of truth in Art which arise from confusion of thought, from irreverence, or from self-assertion. And they are common. The ingenious organist who turned a church hymn into an advertisement for his friend the apothecary is not to have the glory all to himself, so long as we hear in our cathedrals elaborate anthems in which for the sake of working out a fugue such words as "*ran down his beard, ran down his beard, Aaron's beard*" or "*walk ye, walk ye, hundred thousands*" are roared at us by the bass, echoed by the alto, caught up by the tenor, and driven home to us by the soprano, until stunned by the repetition of words without meaning we can neither "run" nor "walk," but only sit down and wonder what it is all about. And then as to L. E. L. and her singular process of incubation. What right have we to complain while we tolerate the couplet with which Cowper has disfigured one of the noblest hymns that ever came to us even from his pure heart? He says—

"The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower."

What does he mean? There may be no data to show whether L. E. L. had any special knowledge of ornithology, but it is quite certain that Cowper knew too much of country life to suppose that roses are good to

eat if only they are full blown. Yet that is his statement; and we learn from it that these Hobgoblins are indeed common, as common as the air we breathe. That turn where we will, we meet them face to face. That they are for ever slipping from the pen of the poet, spoiling the palette of the painter, or playing fantastic tricks with the chisel of the sculptor. That the key of our library will not lock them in, nor the exclusion of books and pictures keep them out. That our daughters sing them to us at our own fire-side. That we carry them with us to church between the pages of our hymnals. That we have nothing to answer when, as we stand in the porch, our neighbour the builder, who is also churchwarden, whispers in our ear "Why should those old fellows who used to build churches know better than I do what shape to make a Gothic belfry? Isn't Brixton as good as Bruges? Why should those pagans who have been dead two thousand years or more tie me up to Corinthian or Ionic or Doric? I'll Doric them!" And at last, in humble response to the organist's evident determination that the poets shall not have it all their own way by writing verses that won't go to his tunes, we find ourselves with a Hobgoblin hot in the mouth as we join in the old words to the old tune "*Come let us take a pil*"—

Is there then no escape? Yes—but only to those who are prepared to live the Higher Life in Art.

The way into the Higher Life lies through the Truth. But Art to be true must be true to something. And that something is Nature. This seems so very simple that I hesitate even to write it down. And yet it is only by perpetual recurrence to such first principles as these that we gain strength for real work. They are to the poet or the painter what his mother Earth was to Antæus. Standing upon this ground he is a giant; lift him from it but for an instant and it will not need a Hercules to slay him, he will be squeezed to death by the veriest little Hobgoblin that he ought to be able to crush between his finger and thumb.

And I have put the proposition in these words because they contain three terms a perfect understanding of which is essential to our subject. These three terms are Nature, Art, and Truth. Let us consider them for a moment separately.

And first, as to Art. We have seen that Art is of the nature of a translation. Of all the little lying Hobgoblins which infest the Higher Life there is none more dangerous than that which is perpetually whispering to the artist that his power is creative. There is no such thing as creative power in Art. The poet and the painter can no more create their subject than they can create the colours with which they paint it, or the ink with which they write about it. The beautiful hues of Nature are the painter's, from which to select and

arrange, but he cannot go beyond them. The universe is the poet's, but he cannot go outside it, any more than he can add to it a single atom. And yet the *lie* meets us everywhere; and in the Higher Life we cannot take a step without giving it trial of battle. It came to Coleridge in the form of an ass thrilled with *eternal* emotion. It came to Wordsworth in the shape of an impossible child. It came to Byron as a kind of pre-vision of the Snark. And it slew them all. It slew them as easily as it slew the suburban builder or the great god Pan of the organ-loft. They ceased for the moment to be poets at all: they ceased to interpret Nature to us: they tried to get outside their universe—they tried to find another colour—and they found only Hobgoblins.

I do not wish to play upon words. If the term "creative" be limited in use to its secondary sense—the shaping, or arranging, or combining, or investing these combinations with new forms—the word may stand as well as any other to distinguish the works of an original thinker from those of a transcriber or copyist. But when we are speaking about Art, and striving to understand something of the Higher Life, it is essential that we should be clear in our use of terms. Let it be understood then that Art is not creative in the sense of adding anything to Nature; that it is a shadow which cannot exist without a substance, and that its substance



is Nature ; that it is an evolution of which the primary is Nature ; that if it is self-evolved, if it seeks to be a primary itself, it can be so only at the cost of being also a Hobgoblin.

And now as to the meaning of the word Nature. It includes more than the visible fabric of creation ; it includes the inner life of which the things we see are but the manifestation. It includes all that emanates from the Creator: in a word, it includes body and soul. There is this Dualism in Nature, and we must take account of it here, for it is the foundation of the Higher Life in Art. But it is not to be confounded with what in Art is called the *real* and the *ideal*. It is rather the differentiation of the *objective* and the *subjective*. Both are real. The eyes that flash intelligence or love are not more real than is the intelligence or love which they express. Courage, is it not a reality ? But so also is Achilles on the field of battle. Fear, will it not blanch the cheek ? But the cheek which is blanched is real too, and has its own beauty. Sorrow, will it not whiten tresses, black it may be now as the raven's wing ? But a mother's hair may be white, yet not through sorrow, and its silver lustre may be as soft to the touch as when her child, tired only with play, first laid his face against it.

The silver whiteness is the objective—that which it

expresses, whether it be age or sorrow, is the subjective beauty ; but both are real, and both are Nature. And though in Nature we see sometimes these two knit together in indissoluble unity, yet they are not always so united. Of this we shall see more as we advance : it is sufficient now to make clear the comprehensive meaning of this second term of our proposition.

For out of these two terms will grow the third. Truth in Art is the perfect correlation of Art with Nature. We have seen that Art is a language. Whatever language I speak, I must speak the truth in it. If Nature gives to every kind of tree a different foliage, and to every cloud a different shape, shall I belie all this, and make my studies of clouds from cotton wool ? or float pink rose-leaves on a basin of water tinged with Prussian blue, and call the painting that I make of it an Italian lake ? Truth in Art begins with reverence—reverence for all that is beautiful in Nature, or that bears any impress of the Divine hand. Reverence also for the genius of other men, regarding it as an emanation from the Giver of all good. Art without truth is only fit to ornament a tea-tray. Art without reverence is too contemptible even for that. And reverence leads to sacrifice. For truth in Art has two sides—the one will not permit any deviation, however slight, from the message to be delivered ; the other will not suffer the messenger to be honoured before the message. Sacrifice

is the subordinating of everything, even though beautiful in itself, that would interfere with the chief interest of the theme. Let the subject be sunrise. Every instant a new object of loveliness becomes visible in the landscape; the trees take on their colour like garments of russet or green; the mists clear from the valley; the corn-field changes from tender grey to the deepest gold; the poppies and corn-flowers at our feet, alike in colour an instant ago, are now crimson and blue: what shall the painter do without the truth which comes of sacrifice? The colour must go from his landscape or it will be daylight, not sunrise. He must choose between the distant village and the rising mist; between the wild flowers blue and red, and the grey twilight of early morning. Then there is the sacrifice of self-assertion. It is no business of the painter to exhibit his own dexterity, any more than it is that of the poet to talk about himself. Some indeed of the old painters used, instead of signing their names, to paint their own portraits in miniature with their children kneeling beside them, in the corner of their pictures; but that was an act of reverence, as we may see by the meek hands folded in prayer. But never should the artist thrust either himself or his workmanship between us and his theme. Let his subject be the Madonna. If to show his dexterity he paints every thread of her garment it will add nothing to the glory of his work. When we look into



the face of the Virgin Mother, we do not care to see how the painter can imitate silk or linen, we look for a higher beauty—the tender eyes that bent over the cradle at Bethlehem, the neck round which the Holy Child once clasped his arms.

It comes then to this: not only that there are two kinds of beauty, the objective and the subjective, but that of these two the subjective is the higher, and that its realization should be the aim of Art. If the painter cannot paint love, he has no right to paint a woman with a baby at her breast. And the same thing is true of Art in all its forms. It is the realization of this subjective beauty that has made great landscapists. See how Turner and Cox invariably sacrificed the lesser to the greater. The work of one was a mighty protest against the materialism of topographical draughtsmanship—it was not Ehrenbreitstein that he saw, but the flash of sunlight that fell upon it fresh from the hand of God. The work of the other was a mighty protest against the traditional notion that fine scenery makes fine pictures—a road across a common was good enough for him, if God passed over it in a storm. This sacrifice of the lesser for the greater is apparent not only in their choice of subject but in their method of painting. There is a beauty in smooth surface and fine texture and delicate handling, but if these were only to be



attained at the cost of any higher beauty, that of light, or movement for instance, these men would discard them in a moment. This is the secret of their rough handling and coarse texture. Their theme was the subjective beauty of a landscape, the blaze of sunshine flashing down on a city of palaces, or the drifting of rain-clouds across a hay-field. And what had smooth paper or varnished paint to do with these things, except to be themselves forgotten in the glory that should come upon them? But see what followed. A herd of imitators, quick to observe how Cox and Turner splashed their colours on the canvas, in their turn splashed accordingly. But out of their splashes came only Hobgoblins. That which to the Masters had been the end they lost sight of altogether, and that which to the Masters had been the means had become their end.

For there is no more inherent beauty or merit in painting with great dabs of colour *à la* Cox, than in tickling a picture to death with small touches *à la* Birket Foster. It is not because of their peculiarities, but in spite of them that men are great. The characteristic of Turner was not that he painted roughly, but that he painted light, and colour. The characteristic of Cox was not that he blotted in his forms, but that the forms he blotted in represent Nature—Nature alive and awake, and with a temper. The characteristic of Birket Foster

is not that he paints minutely, but that his skies are colossal in splendour, and that in the narrow space of a hand's breadth he puts more subjective beauty than we find upon the yards of canvas of other men. It is well for the painter to study every touch and process by which such men produce such results, just as the scholar should study the language of a great author. But to know such men only by their processes would be the same as to know Sophocles or Horace only through a book of Greek Accidence or the pages of a Latin Delectus.

It is the custom of painters to live much together, and to see much of each other's work. No doubt they gain by such intercourse, at least in the mastery of the material elements of their craft. But how much better it would be if painters and poets could thus be associated—if every Giotto could have his Dante, and every Dante his Giotto—that they might together work out their "Paradise," each in his own way, but each strengthened by all that his friend could teach him. The dangers that beset the painter and the poet are very different in kind. The one begins with the objective beauty of some material form, into which he has to breathe a living soul. The other begins with the subjective beauty of life or passion, for the incarnation of which he must find a material form. It is the glory of the painter to be a poet; it is the glory of the poet to be a painter.

But the difficulty of the painter is to tell us what he thinks ; the difficulty of the poet is to show us what he sees. When Cowper wrote—

“ The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower,”

he may have had the most distinct perception of the subjective beauty of his theme—the unfolding of the purposes of God through the mysteries of creation—but of the objective process of the growth of a bud into a flower and its results he appears to have lost sight altogether. When painters club together to buy a costume or a suit of armour, and set it up in their midst, and paint it, with *something* inside it, they may have a keen appreciation of the effect of light on polished steel, or the blending and contrast of colour ; but of the hearts that should beat within that armour or that costume, they are content to tell us—nothing.

Thus we have pictures without souls, and poems without bodies ; as though it were impossible in Art for the spiritual and the material to exist together. In Art, however, it is possible to serve two masters. And Dualism in Art is the serving of them both faithfully.

## XIV.

### THE ALTER EGO.

#### I. CECIL TO REGINALD.

MY DEAR REGINALD,—

In a paper that I have just sent to the press occurs the following passage:—"It is the custom of painters to live much together, and to see much of each other's work. No doubt they gain by such intercourse, at least in the mastery of the material elements of their craft. But how much better it would be if painters and poets could thus be associated; if every Giotto could have his Dante, and every Dante his Giotto, that they might together work out their "Paradise," each in his own way, but each strengthened by all that his friend could teach him."

Now I want you to read these words very carefully (I wish indeed that you would read the whole chapter of which they form a part) and tell me whether you think this cry of mine is a waste cry, that never can have any answer, a hopeless longing that never can be



satisfied—or whether it is a legitimate desire, reasonable in its limits, and that should be pursued steadily until it is obtained.

Do you remember when we two were lads, and our father called us into his study, and there was a certain grave look in his eyes, and in our mother's a tender sweetness, that seemed like the sudden lifting of a veil, beyond which for the first time in our lives we really looked into the future—and you chose Oxford and I chose London?

What did Oxford mean to you, and London to me, but that you were already a poet, and I a would-be painter? For you the Schools, for me the Academy. For you Homer and Greek accident—for me Phidias and the articulation of the muscles. For you the conflict of mind that has shaped our lives—for me the beauty of form and colour that has made our lives worth living. For you the thesis that Luther nailed on the church door—for me the white paper fluttered by the wind, or the door itself with its quaint carvings, or the rush of sunlight streaming through it. For you the pen—for me the pencil;—and for each of us such brains as kind fortune may have left us after we had done with cricket-bats and single-sticks.

It meant all this—but did it mean separation also? We know it did not. We are nearer to each other now,

perhaps, than we were when you beat me at hexameters and I beat you at geometry. Did it mean that the resources of Literature and Art are two currencies that cannot be interchanged—that your *denarii* cannot be reckoned in my *kreutzers*, nor your language be translated into mine? I hope it does not mean this. Does it mean that we can no more help each other as we used to do with our school tasks—that although “the whirligig of time” has so brought us together again that we are both of us—poet and painter—studying from the same book—does it mean that neither of us, if it comes to a pinch, can give the other a “crib”?

That is what I am writing to question you about, and you see how large a question it is, and why I cannot answer it for myself. No one can answer it who is not both a poet and a painter. I am not a poet any more than you are a painter, but together we may, perhaps, get a little closer to the truth of the matter than we could each by himself.

Then let me tell you first of all how it is that the subject has grown up in my mind until it insists upon being considered. It has grown with the very necessities of my daily work. You see I began my letter with Dante and Giotto, but I did not begin my life with them. Even now they shine as stars altogether too bright for my picture—they shall be as the sun or the

moon to light it, but they shall not be included in its field. Besides which, of one of them at least, I suppose you know much more than I could tell you. But this is a matter of every-day work to me, of which, perhaps you do not know quite so much. What, for instance, can you know of the interior of a church? It is true that there is a great building that joins your rectory garden, and that it holds a good many people, but it is not one of the wonders of the world for beauty. And if you have preached in this or that cathedral, I have sketched in hundreds, and while the preacher has been busy with his subject, have had leisure to speculate whether the colour that next should fall upon his face, from the stained glass, would be purple or green. I have spent, as you know, a great part of my life in these minsters of Italy and Belgium and France and Germany and England, and have seen everything—from the tender dawn lighting up the east to the flood of meridian sunshine—from the golden oriflamme at sunset to the silver and ebony of midnight, when even the flaming sword of Michael seems only like an etching on grey paper. And I say these things never have been painted.

But this is only the very fringe of the banner (of St. Luke I suppose). Think of the accumulated glory that has come upon these churches through the long centuries of years, scarcely a decade of which has failed to leave its mark upon everyone of them—a chapel



here, or an aisle ; a window there, or a screen ; a statue by Buonarotti, or a picture by Titian or Vandyke—and everywhere the rime of age—as if the Hours, whose gentle office Hesiod tells us it is to open the gates of heaven, had agreed that the choicest gifts of colour should stream only through clerestory windows where are the aureoles of the saints. And all this I say never can be painted.

And I have said nothing yet about historical associations, and tender memories, and subtle imaginings,—which are as incident to Chartres or Westminster as their perfumes are to flowers. But, instead of adding these, forget even the things I have named. Forget the changing effects of light, and the quaint records of many generations ; forget everything that Time has to answer for—whether under the form of the three young ladies with the pretty names, Eunomia, Dice, and Irene, or the old man with a scythe—and still there will be left the one element which of all others is the real glory of a cathedral church—I mean the pure symmetry of its form, its exquisite proportion, the perfect adaptation of its parts. So that the banner may be reversed and still be beautiful :—on the one side, the venerable towers of Notre Dame, or the effusive richness of St. Etienne du Mont, or the jewelled radiance of La Sainte Chapelle ; on the other side, the austere majesty of the Pantheon or the sensuous magnificence of the Made-



leine. All these you may see in one city, and within the space of an hour; and you will say that one star differs from another star in glory. But to say this is not enough for the painter. How shall he dare to touch any of these things until he has learned not only to accumulate but to differentiate his impressions. If he knows only that like stars they differ, he may make them differ only in absurdity. He must know *how* they differ; and it will cost him many hours of careful study, and many days and years of patient labour, and journeys to many cities, to find this out.

And it will be well for him if he can find it out even then. It is just here, however, that I believe the poet may help the painter; by standing between him and the architect as an interpreter. Perhaps the architect is the *lusus naturæ* of which I spoke at first,—one, that is, who is both poet and artist. Of this I am quite sure, that every fine cathedral is the artistic embodiment of some poetic conception. And so I try to get at this conception—to read back from the architect's work into the architect's mind, and learn something, if ever so little, of his spirit before venturing to become in my turn an interpreter to others. Thus, for every cathedral that I paint for other eyes to look upon, I write down some words for myself only—words that shall be to me something like one of our old examination papers, that must be mastered before another step is taken—words

that shall put to the test whether I am really going to paint, however imperfectly, the true thing, or a false conception of it. This is the meaning of the verses you see everywhere in my sketch-books and on the margins of my drawings, and that, I confess, are no adornment. But they are very useful. I scarcely know which is of the greater value to me, my fourteen pentameters or my two-foot rule. I know only that I would not willingly paint a cathedral without both of them. The principle of it is very simple. Whatever is painted should be painted for the sake of the highest beauty it possesses. Man, for the mind that is in him. Landscape, that we might therefore praise the Lord and declare his goodness to the children of men. Flowers, for their delicacy and colour—we cannot paint their perfume or that too should be added. The cathedral, for its forest of tall pillars. Yes! if it is Chartres or Milan, but not if it is Treves. In Treves there are no pillars,—but huge piers of stone; it is a quarry rather than a forest. *Strong with the savage splendour of rude walls*;—Don't you see? the march is already begun; five steps are taken almost before I can get the two-foot rule out of my pocket.

And so it falls out that a picture of a cathedral church should be not the general embodiment of general ideas, but what every cathedral is in itself, namely, the very special outcome of a very special mind. If one would

understand La Sainte Chapelle, for instance, it is no use trying to carry Treves or Chartres into it. There would not be room for them. But the difference is not only that of size, or the little chapel, the Lily of France, might be compared to Hermia, who laments of Helena—

“She hath made compare  
Between our statures ; she hath urged her height ;  
And with her personage, her tall personage,  
Her height, forsooth—  
How low am I, thou painted maypole ? speak ;  
How low am I ? I am not yet so low,  
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.”

It need not come to that, however ; for the difference is not so much the difference between Hermia and Helena as that between the Fairy Queen, Titania, and the two young men Lysander and Demetrius—a difference, that is, of kind. Within the small compass of the chapel of St. Louis there is a loveliness in the presence of which the painter, if he will only wait a little, will find himself forgetting a little also—until the forest of tall pillars of Chartres, and the rude walls of Treves, will seem, as seemed his past adventures to Demetrius :—

“Things small and undistinguishable,  
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.”

For the beauty of La Sainte Chapelle is as right royal of its kind as is that of Chartres or Treves—but the materials are different—the distances are different—so are the proportions—so even is the colour of the light



that can scarcely penetrate the jewels hung in mid-air that are called windows. Once more, therefore, I can see no help for it but to bring out the two-foot rule and the seventy feet of verse:—

*Like to a Virgin Queen in robes of State,  
August in presence, delicately fair  
As the fair girl that by her side doth wait  
Uncrown'd save with her golden-tress'd hair;  
Regal in splendour, yet withal as chaste  
As among flowers the lily: as tho' some power  
The treasures of the whole world there had placed  
To build again Medea's blissful bower.  
There the soft light on the pale pavement falls  
Leaving the rest in its own splendour dim;  
There wondrous visions crowd the painted walls,  
Of forms divine and wing'd cherubim—  
Visions apocalyptic, diadems  
More precious than are wrought of earthly gems.*

This is what I have to put upon canvas; and I confess I cannot do it. Nevertheless, it is some help to me to have thus placed before myself a clearly defined aim.

Now, tell me—If, instead of being thus stammeringly expressed, these verses, intermediary between the painter and his theme, had been the perfect work of a real poet, would they not have been so much the stronger for me to lean upon? I think they would. I am sure they would have been to my mental vision what a clear north light is to my studio. And all this that I have imagined—the finished and perfect work, that is, of the great poets—does lie within the painter's reach. For



myself, I have searched diligently for all that they can tell me of a cathedral church, and I know perhaps every line that has been written,—at least in our mother-tongue—from Chaucer's—

“The rynges on the temple dore that hange,  
And fyrès brenden on the auter bright,”

to the Laureate's—

“O Milan, O the chanting quires,  
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,  
The height, the space, the gloom, the glory.”

But it is for the landscape painter and the painter of human life and passion that the poets have poured forth their richest treasures. What account can our young painters give of the use they have made of these treasures? Look through any of the catalogues of our picture galleries, and recall the visions they record. Item, “A Woman trundling a Mop” (without the advantage of a hidden string to make the mop go round). Item, “A November Fog (in which the artist has lost his way)—a Discord in Whitey-brown.” What thoughts do these things conjure up either of Nature or of her Children the Poets? But to look upon the pictures of David Cox or Turner is to think of Wordsworth and Byron; to look upon Wilkie is to think of Burns; to look upon Claude is to think of Milton; to look upon Giotto is to think of Dante.

I must stop here, or the sun and moon will get round into my eyes again. Let me end with two very practical suggestions :—

1st. That the next time a figure painter sits down to paint a cottage interior, with all its pots and pans, he shall just read over Russell Lowell's little poem of "The Courting." And that the next time a landscape painter gets well out of the roar of London, and is fairly on his way to Betwys, he shall lean back comfortably in the railway carriage and read the four short odes that he will find at the beginning of Keats' poems.

2nd. That you shall be the first poet to be elected into our club, which has hitherto been limited exclusively to artists.

I am, my dear Reginald,

Yours very faithfully,

CECIL ———

XV.

*THE ALTER EGO.*

II. REGINALD TO CECIL.

MY DEAR CECIL,

It is a very neat way of doing it,—to ask me to read just a few lines, and then to refer back to a whole chapter, and finally, in the shape of a long letter, to pile another chapter upon that, like Ossa on Pelion. The heavens, indeed, were not to be thus scaled, even by the Giants—but I am at your mercy.

You may take it for granted, however, that I have read all that you have set before me. The extract for *your* sake, because you desired me to do so; the former chapter for *my own* sake, as I naturally wished to know the worst of any scrape into which you might have fallen; and the rest of your letter just to see if there was any impertinence in it. If, however, there is one thing more than another that has given me satisfaction, it is to find that you do not go so far as to propose that every man should be his own poet. I thought at first

that you were coming to that, but I own I was mistaken, though I may as well say at once that such a suggestion would be beyond the pale of toleration.

Now, I should like to put what I have to say in the most delicate manner possible, but still to put it plainly. The Academy's knowledge of Letters is about on a level with Oxford's knowledge of Art. If Mr. Gladstone and Dean Stanley are amongst your professors, so is Mr. Ruskin amongst ours. *They* say beautiful things (about Art) at Academy dinners; and *he* says beautiful things (about political economy) in our lecture-room. But that is about all. Neither is Ancient Literature, or History, taught to you, nor is Art taught to us.

And, after all, what does it matter? Is it not enough for you that you are able to sign your own names on your pictures?—and for us that we can talk about Botticelli and Ghirlandaio as if they were men of our year, and had rooms next to ours at Brazenose? Not that I mean to imply that we are on an equality. One boat must be at the head of the river. You say yourself, in a book of yours I was reading the other day, that painting follows after poetry—that Raphael and Titian and Angelo follow Dante. Just so. Then don't forget that you are the younger brother. Do you remember, when we first learned our letters, how our mother used to pin us to her knee, and if we wriggled too much how she would pin the book as well, or it



would have been perpetually tumbled to the ground. It was quarto in shape, but not too thick for her delicate fingers to manage. Now, it has occurred to me that by the time I had done with it, and it came to be your turn to take my place, the book must have been considerably the worse for wear. Even if the alphabet was not actually mutilated, I have a distinct consciousness that I left it considerably less legible than when I found it. I only throw out this suggestion as a possible explanation of what has happened since. But perhaps you spent your time in looking at the pictures.

For now that I come to think of it, there were pictures in the book. I remember, in particular, a curious mixing up of the story of St. Sebastian with the fate of an impossible frog, though the frog belonged properly to week-days and the nursery, and St. Sebastian to Sundays and the little window over our family pew. I know the *archers* were the same in each. Does this confusion of ideas seem very inexcusable? Not so much, perhaps, considering the mind of a child, as would be the confounding by a great painter of the glitter of St. Mark's, Venice, with the grey and gold of St. Stephen's, seen from the Thames at Westminster; or as the painting of Gulnare like a pretty housemaid would be, and Conrad like the baker who lives round the corner in the High Street. Yet that is what I see very often in your exhibitions at Burlington House; so that I am

not quite sure whether my last impressions of Art are much better than my first. These things, indeed, hurt me much more than does the Woman with a Mop, or the Phantasy in Buff. The commonplace in Art can be passed over, and positive ugliness can be shunned. But the "Gulnare" becomes a trap from which it is more difficult to escape, and if "Conrad" does seize upon you he will leave a mark that you will never forget.

But why did you limit your question to the few lines with which your letter begins? It was a saying of Newman's, that when we have stated our terms and cleared the ground all argument is generally either superfluous or fruitless. I think that in the next sentence you would have found in your own words both the statement of terms and the clearing of the ground. You say: "*The dangers which beset the painter and the poet are very different in kind. The one begins with the objective beauty of some material form—into which he has to breathe a living soul. The other begins with the subjective beauty of life and passion—for the incarnation of which he must find a material form. In a word, it is the glory of the painter to be a poet—it is the glory of the poet to be a painter. But the difficulty of the one is to tell us what he thinks; the difficulty of the other is to show us what he sees.*"

Now, if all this be true, I think the rest must be granted. If poets do ever fail through the unrestrained

license of the imagination, and painters through the closeness of their attention to material facts, it cannot but be a clear gain to the one to attain a steadier balance, and to the other to be quickened to a keener perception of the spiritual in life. But let us be quite sure that it is true. And to do this let us suppose a case. Suppose, then, that the three young ladies you mention have read Mr. Tyrwhitt's book "Our Sketching Club," and have become members of a sketching club accordingly. Miss Dice can paint blue eyes; Miss Irene has a recipe for pink sunsets; and Miss Eunomia can draw flowers. Suppose that they have for their subject "A slip"—chosen by some heartless member who happened to be ready with a sketch of a boulder-stone tumbling into a lake, or a ship ready to be launched. Well, of course they come to me as rector of the parish, and each wants to know what she is to paint. Now comes into play your theorem. I tell them that I have just heard from my brother, who is an artist, that they, as painters, should begin with the objective beauty of some material form, into which they must breathe a living soul. They reply that they do not quite know what I mean by "objective." I explain by your antithesis, namely, that I, as a poet, should have to begin with the subjective beauty of life and passion, for the incarnation of which I should have to find a material form. They understand this better,

but separately and collectively demand that I should be the first to begin. And the following is the result :—

*It was but a slip of a rose,  
And she flung it down as in scorn—  
Then she smiled till she led me to really suppose  
That she dropped it because of a thorn.*

This is the first incarnation of the idea of “a slip.” The subjective has become the objective, and it will do very well for Eunomia. But the “she” is still only a penumbra, altogether too indefinite to be of any use to Dice. And so I go on :—

*She was but a slip of a girl,  
And I was six-foot in my shoes;  
Oh, I shouldn't have staked for a golden curl  
A heart I was certain to lose.*

Observe, the object has changed, but the subject remains. Now, however, I have to reckon with Irene. All this you see might have happened within doors; the scattered petals only adding a little crimson or white to a drawing-room carpet—and what then would become of Irene's recipe. And so, once more :—

*It was only a slip after all,—  
The sunset had dazzled my eyes;  
But before the moon looked o'er the garden wall  
It was I who had won the prize.*

Now, I fear you will consider this method of analysing your proposition a little too realistic. But you know I pride myself upon being eminently practical, and I wished to put it, like everything else, to the test. It



bears it fairly well so far. Given a mallet and balls—at what game shall we play? Given an object—to turn it into a subject? Given the flower, or the pair of blue eyes, or the pink sunset, that I intend to paint to-day—how shall I differentiate them from the flowers, or the blue eyes, or the pink sunsets, that I painted yesterday and the day before? By making them tell a story. But where is the story to be found? Ask the poet. He is sure to be looking out at the same time for a pink sunset, or blue eyes, or a flower—as one who wishes for a game looks out for balls and a mallet, and if he cannot find them is content with a battledore. But that just touches the difficulty. The poet can play almost any game. The painter, generally, can play but one. Michael Angelo was indeed painter and sculptor and architect and poet. A painter now is only a painter. And even as a painter he is supposed to paint landscapes only, or figures only. If landscapes, he chooses once for all whether to look inland or to stand for ever gazing out to sea. If figures, he decides in early manhood whether they shall walk in silk attire, or shall wear blue jackets, or ragged coats, or no coats at all; and having settled that, he will give them faces to match, so that they shall look like so many dolls cast from the same mould, and, like so many dolls, shall not be able to change their garments. In a word, one can paint pink sunsets and another can paint blue eyes.

And again I ask, what does it signify? I do not point this out as a subject of regret. I name it only as a fact, because the consideration of it will take us to the very root of the matter. You have ceased to be painters because you see visions which you must realize; you desire visions because you are painters and want something to paint. And so you ask us to come and dream for you. But suppose my dream is of blue eyes, and you know only how to paint pink sunsets!

Even then we may not be so far apart as might at first sight appear. It would mean only that what to you is objective is to me subjective. In the first of the four odes that you say the landscape painter ought to read, Keats writes—

“I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs.”

Yet they *are* flowers to him, and it *is* incense to him, without which there would have been less ecstasy for him in that to which he listened. While in the second of these odes he says—

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter.”

This then is the relationship in which we stand to each other. “Incense and flowers unseen,”—that is what Art is to Poetry. “Melodies unheard,”—that is what Poetry is to Art.

And you think it would be well for Art if the painter

would learn from the poet more of these melodies ; and that it would be well for Literature if the poet would learn from the painter more about these flowers. Perhaps it would. And you think also that they might learn thus from each other if they were brought together in a more personal intercourse, and shared more with each other their visions and their dreams. But who cares very much for what a painter thinks, or for what a poet sees? Everybody knows that the one is always thinking that his picture might have been better hung at the Academy, and that the other is always looking out from a garret window in Grub Street on the smoky chimney-pots of an unappreciative city. I do not, however, wish to shirk the question by referring you to "everybody." The first part of it, indeed, you have yourself answered in showing me your method of work. It *is* well for the painter of a cathedral church to know something of the associations which cling to his subject, as well as to understand the subtle influence upon the mind of simple lines in their infinite combinations of proportion and curvature. It *is* well for the landscapist to know the difference between the sound of the wind in a plantation of poplars and in a forest of pine-trees—and to know wherein Autumn is less sad than Spring. It *is* well for the historical painter to know something of the passion of life. And if knowledge of these things can be gained, or strengthened, or refined by any personal intercourse,



let those who desire it seek it. But I am not so sure of the answer to be given to the second part of your question. How can you stand between us and Nature as an interpreter? How can you help us to work out our Paradise? How can you strengthen us in our work? Is there anything in Art that you can show us that we cannot see, and see better, for ourselves in Nature? I do not for a moment deny that the painter's thinking powers may be of a very humble order. But have you any evidence to show that defective vision is at all characteristic of the poet? We are not bound to show you (in our poems) all we see (of Grub Street), any more than you are bound to tell us (in your pictures) all you think (about the Hanging Committee). If Keats does not see the flowers which are at his feet, it is by choice that they are unseen. In the third of those same odes he sees, even to the moss on the apple-tree, to the soft-lifting of the hair by the winnowing wind. And in the fourth ode, only listen to him :—

“Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,  
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,  
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.”

And yet you say the poet may learn of the painter. Learn what? Do you remember when we were at school, how the old Doctor whipped us for going to sleep during the sermon; but when we caught *him* napping he explained that he only closed his eyes that he



might think the more. And the Poet has the same right to shut his eyes if a little indistinctness of vision will be of use to him. I think it must have been of use to Dante in the XIX. and XXXI. cantos of the "Inferno," where he describes the comical punishment of the Simoniacs and the Giants—comical, that is, in its pictorial aspect, howsoever terrible it might be in grim fact. I wonder whether Giotto ever suggested to his friend that it would never do, for a painter at least, to bury Nimrod from the waist downwards in the earth,—

"Si che la ripa, ch'era perizoma  
Dal mezzo in giù"—

or to put Pope Boniface upside down in a round hole in the pavement, with his feet protruding above the surface,

—"e delle gambe  
In fino al grosso."

What can the painter do with such scenes as these? The attempt to realize them is possible only because their realization is impossible. Claude and Turner have tried to paint the sun in the heavens: and—failing—have still left the record of a desire. But who can desire to look upon the Infernal Hurricane?—or the Cataract of the River of Blood?—or the open Gates of the City of Dis? Dante, however, did not consider the desire of our eyes; for (whether Giotto liked it or not) he made his Hell not only appalling in its cruelty—but revolting in its ugliness. And yet Dante was a painter

too, and had the keenest sense of beauty—was he not drawing the profile of his Beatrice, his lost Beatrice, when the news came to him that she was lost to him a second time—or found—by death?

But perhaps when he wrote the “Inferno” Dante shut his eyes that he might think the more. Did Shakespeare, then, shut his eyes also when he wrote that greatest of all scenes, the last in “King Lear”?

“Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!  
What is ’t thou say’st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low; an excellent thing in woman:—  
I kill’d the slave that was a hanging thee.”

Did Shakespeare measure the full meaning of the last word but one, as a painter would have measured it? Did it mean to him *all* that it must mean to those whose first appeal is to our eyes? He is more kind to Ophelia—who dies gathering fantastic garlands—

“Of crow flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples.”

Why is the dear life torn out so savagely from the sweet Cordelia?

Because there is another element in the question. It is only the poet who dares unveil the Prophet of Kho-rassan. And he has the right to do this, not that he may show us terrible things, but because he can lay his fingers upon our eyes, if need be, and lead us by a way we know not. A very perfect instance of this may be found in that brief poem, by our Laureate, which we read

together eight years ago. You will remember the simple story of it, and the vividness with which the whole action is brought before us. A land is wasted by famine and pestilence and war. A great cry goes up from people and priest, until at last comes the answer from the gods :—

“ The King is happy  
In child and wife ;  
Take you his dearest,  
Give us a life.

“ The Priest went out by heath and hill ;  
The King was hunting in the wild ;  
They found the mother sitting still ;  
She cast her arms about the child.  
The child was only eight summers old,  
His beauty still with his years increased,  
His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,  
He seem'd a victim due to the priest.”

Then comes the pleading of the wife—the despair of the king—the madness of the people, until—

“ The rites prepared, the victim bared,  
The knife uprising to the blow,  
To the altar-stone she sprang alone,  
‘ Me, not my darling, no ! ’  
He caught her away with a sudden cry ;  
Suddenly from him brake his wife,  
And shrieking, ‘ I am his dearest, I—  
I am his dearest ! ’ rush’d on the knife.”

I remind you of all this to ask you to observe how the poet has closed our eyes just where we come upon the subjective beauty of his theme. But he has only closed them that we may see the more perfectly. His purpose

is to show the unfolding of this great passion of love. And this we *do* see, as though he had taken the very rose of love and torn it petal from petal before our eyes. As to the material part—the king is described, the child is described, but not the one great actor. It is not a question of the beautiful tresses or blue eyes of this woman. It is the wife and mother in her great love—a love not to be measured by the beauty of the temple in which it dwells, but, like a temple itself, to be measured only by the golden measuring rod of the Angel of God.

Is there any parallel to this in Art? That is a question for you to answer. Can you so differentiate the love of wife and mother? Can you so take us near to the Cataract that we shall hear the thunder of it, as it plunges into the abyss, and yet not see its dark waters? After what our Professor says, I would not venture an opinion.

He says that poets are apt to be among the very worst judges of painting. He says, in defiance of Keats, that a Greek would have regarded an orchard of apple-blossoms, with the far-off blue of the Lake of Geneva seen between the flowers, simply with the eyes of a Devonshire farmer as bearing on the probable price of cyder. He says that the words *objective* and *subjective* are two of the most objectionable that were ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians



—that no words can be more exquisitely and in all points useless, and that he merely speaks of them that he may at once and for ever get them out of his way and out of his readers'.

And if I were to add as many more "he says" as would fill a volume, do you think I should come upon one that does not run counter to all that you ask me to believe? So I fear we must part company. You have already drawn me into using forbidden words. Is it to be expected that Oxford will go against its own professor? In the meantime I would humbly ask whether you have any advice to give me as to what I should do, if I were going to write a poem, that will correspond with your advice to the painter to read Keats or Russell Lowell when he is going to paint a picture. The impossible frog is I fear defaced beyond recovery, and St. Sebastian has disappeared from the little window since our church was restored. Shall I ask Miss Irene for her recipe for pink sunsets? or shall I come up to London and study the Woman trundling a Mop, and the Symphony in Buff and Bottle-green?

Ever yours faithfully,

REGINALD ———

## XVI.

### *DUALISM IN ART.—II.*

THE first essential for the poet or the painter is a thorough understanding of the original concept with which he has to deal, an understanding so complete that it shall differentiate the subjective beauty of it from the objective. Without this, if he sees at all, it will be with a confused vision, he will see only men as trees walking. A cathedral church or a chimney-corner; a queen upon her throne or an outcast shivering upon a doorstep; a landscape with broad river and mighty trees or a violet hiding from the sun; nothing is too great, nothing is too lowly to be the theme of Art and to lead us into the Higher Life. Paint, therefore, what you see. It cannot be so difficult but that it should be dared—it cannot be so simple but that it should be revered.

Paint what you see—that is one half of Dualism in Art. But then *seeing* is the other half, and is an art in itself. An English Scholar and Divine—distinguished

for an exquisite tenderness of disposition and grace of mind as much as for his great learning—was yet singularly unprepossessing in appearance. On the occasion of a visit to a friend he observed her child, a little girl, shrink timidly behind a chair as if alarmed. With the gentlest voice and gesture he entreated the child to come to him—but she still hesitated. At length, in reply to the question “Do you not know me?” she said, deprecatingly, “Yes; I gave you a bun this morning at the Zoological Gardens.” Nevertheless she came to him after all.

Perhaps the story is exaggerated—perhaps it is altogether fictitious—at any rate it was only a child's mistake. But it serves the purpose for which I relate it. Paint what you see. It is an excellent maxim—but whether it leads to excellent painting depends upon what we do see. It is not children only who begin by mistaking the object for the subject. Let our vision grow as did that of the child. At first she saw only that which made her afraid; she learned to see that which disarmed her of fear and won her heart for ever. Is it too much to ask of the painter that he shall have this dual vision? Or are “sweetness and light” to be found only in the face of a Beatrice Cenci?

Then take another case. The subjective beauty of Strasburg Cathedral is its magnificence; of Amiens, its symmetry; of St. Mark's, Venice, its richness. Amiens



Cathedral is so colossal that Westminster Abbey, the loftiest of our cathedral churches, would stand inside it and still leave room to build another church upon its roof—it is so exquisitely proportioned and of such delicate workmanship that every line is full of grace, and every stone a work of art; and upon all this has come the splendour that time alone can give. Yet artists go there, and seeing some bit of upholstery, with which in a corrupt age an ignorant Chapter has desecrated it, will paint the wretched morsel, thinking that they are painting a cathedral interior. St. Mark's is one of the wonders of the world, a church of which the pavement is of precious stones, the walls are hung with jewels—mosaics designed by the hands of Titian, and the other giants. Yet the pictures we see of it are holes and corners, scraps, and "bits," as artists call them, for the sake of colour, that are as much like St. Mark's as gilt gingerbread is like kings and queens, or as a yellow petal dropped upon a sanded floor is like a field of buttercups. Why are these things done in Art? The historical painter, fired by the passion of some great action, gives us his record of it. Some, who are called "figure-men," cannot paint an historical group, but at least they aspire to paint a single figure. Others, who cannot even do that, are content to go on for ever painting "heads." But no one is content with "tails." It would be a poor soul who never rose above an eye, or



a nose, or a finger, as the subject of his picture. Yet that is what they do who, having no thorough understanding of the original concept, the subjective beauty, of a cathedral church, slink into the holes and corners of it and carry away only "bits" and scraps.

But it may be said the subjective and the objective beauty of these cathedrals are coincident. The stones of Venice are rich, and the effect is richness; the tracery of Amiens is elegant, and the effect is elegance; the proportions of Strasburg are magnificent, and the effect is magnificence. This, however, is not always the case. In Treves Cathedral the stones are rough and unpolished, with jagged lines of Roman brickwork showing red amongst them, the piers are rude and unshapely, there are no delicate shafts or fine tracery, there is no objective beauty in it at all. Yet it is one of the noblest cathedrals in the world, for its subjective beauty is strength.

Barbaric strength, perhaps, but strength. The first impression as we enter is that of desolation. We realize the strength, but it is against us. It is as though a child had placed its tiny hand for the first time in the strong grasp of a man. But presently this feeling changes to one of trust and reverence: the strength is not against us after all. It is as though the child looked up into the man's face and found only kindness there.

And finally the trust gives place to love : the strength is on our side ; and we find that through the gates of Treves we have passed into the Higher Life.

Let us take one more example of this Dualism in Art. The subjective beauty of a cottage interior is the tenderness and pathos of home life. There is an objective beauty also in the sweet girl who is the light of it, and in the children who are its laughter, and in the mother's face and the old man's which are its wisdom and strength. But he who crosses the threshold, if it is to be to him the threshold of the Higher Life, must have keen eyes and fine susceptibilities. The true poet or painter, Burns or Burr, it does not matter which, will render all the passion of the scene, showing us the loveliness of it and yet showing us the lowliness too, the worn garments and poor furniture. Even the pots and pans may all be there, painted for the sake of the subject, not the subject painted for them. But it is not enough, as so many seem to think, to paint pots and pans, and candlesticks, and kettles, and pussy-cats in the corner, and ragged coats, unless some reasonable care be taken that the ragged coats cover true flesh and blood and not Hobgoblins.

If it is asked which is the nobler theme, the fretted vaults of the many-aisled cathedral or the narrow rafters of the cottar's cabin, the answer is not far to seek.

That is the nobler which holds most of human life and passion. The question is not whether the garment is ragged, but what it covers. What does the cathedral cover in our thoughts?

*Strong with the savage splendour of rude walls,  
Yet with the memories of a thousand years  
Tender as the first flush of dawn that falls  
Silver and crimson on the massive piers :  
Argent and gules upon a field of gray—  
That is the vision—sounds are in my ears  
As of a river's tide—Beautiful Treves !  
'Tis the Moselle that thus doth lingering stay  
To kiss thy feet, and cool its restless wave  
Beneath the shadows of thy towers to-day,  
O treacherous stream ! to flatter and pass by,  
Nor whisper how the ancient gods were hurld  
From the strong altars of the Pagan world,  
And now forgotten in thy bosom lie.*

This is what a cathedral means to some of us, and it is in such meaning as this that we find the Higher Life.

And we find it in the rustic scene as well, in its picturesque beauty and tender pathos. We find it in Murillo's Spanish boys, where intense humour gleams through the brown eyes, and lurks in every shred of the tattered garments. We find it in some of the pictures of the Dutch school, and in those of the early English painters, Hogarth and Wilkie. There is an exquisite instance of it in a painting by W. Hunt called "Love at First Sight," where a stable-boy comes upon a vision



of beauty, a little girl asleep upon the straw, and he, leaning upon his pitchfork, gazes upon her with his eyes as wide open as his heart. We find it again in the works of our living painters, who have made rustic life their theme, their favourite theme perhaps. Who has ever told more tenderly or faithfully than has Faed such stories of lowly life, or quiet heroism, or tender affection that its lowliness cannot hide? Think of any of these pictures, and then test them as we have tested Treves. What do they mean to us? What do they cover in our thoughts? They cover human life and passion. They mean love, and hope, and tenderness, and patient forbearance, and brave endurance, and faithful service.

Or rather this is what they should mean—this is the subjective beauty by virtue of which alone they can claim a place in the Higher Life in Art. If they do not mean this, they are only the tricks of expert painters who would take us by guile of clever mimicry of material forms—they are like those verses of Charles Kingsley's of which he wrote to a friend that he had "laid a poem which would'nt hatch."

This insistence upon the necessity of the realization of the objective and the subjective—the material and the spiritual—is all that I have proposed to myself in these chapters on Dualism in Art. But there remains



another and a greater question to be dealt with under the same title; namely, the true limits of, and the necessity for, the representation of Evil as well as Good. In this sense Dualism in Art, instead of being a chapter in the Higher Life, would be a subject of which the Higher Life would be a chapter only. If the work is not anticipated by abler and better hands, I shall yet hope to prepare myself to deal with it. But the Scylla and Charybdis of my Preface warn me not to enter upon it here. It is a subject with which to begin a volume, not to end one.

Once more, therefore, just to gather these few thoughts together. *The way into the Higher Life lies through the Truth.* For the creations, so called, of the Poet and Painter are translations; and translations to be worth anything must be true. They need not be complete—they may be fragments only, but the fragments must be true. They need not tell everything—that indeed might be impossible—but what they do tell must be the truth. There is much that they may fail to do; but failing in this, they are not works of Art at all, they are Hobgoblins.

Hobgoblins by the Great Masters perhaps, but still Hobgoblins, because they are false. And it is only in the light of the Higher Life that we learn to see how ugly is their aspect and how sinister their influence. For Art is not the tickling of a piece of paper with a

point of chalk and calling it doing "heads," or staining it with blue and green and yellow and calling it painting "landscapes." This is part of the mechanism of Art, but Art is much more than this. The Higher Life in Art can indeed be lived by men and women who have never learned to handle brush or pencil. The Higher Life in Art is not an abstract symbol but a very concrete presence, and its formula is this—*Art to be true must be true to something.*

*And that something is Nature.* Nature, not only in the metonymic but also in the primary sense of the word ; not only as comprehending the things we see, but as the first cause of them. For it is impossible to live the Higher Life in Art without being led from one glory to another. Art stands alone in this, that it engages not some, but every faculty of our being. Faith, reason, affection are alike exercised in its mission. Theologians might dispute for ever without the aid of the geometrician ; but without his cobweb of fine lines Art could not have built the temples, the firmaments of stone, beneath which they worship. Mathematicians might still be analysing triangles and spheres if Christ had not died ; but without the hope of life of which He came to assure us, Art would have built no temples at all. Like the summer clouds which fill the sky, Art sweeps across our world, drawing into its bosom all our religious aspirations, all our scientific attainments, every

tender emotion of our hearts. How beautiful are these summer clouds! now ranged in lines like the battlemented walls of a distant city; now massed together like an army with banners; now drifting through the azure in a myriad of ethereal shapes like a company of angels looking down on us from heaven. How beautiful is Art! in the splendour of its imagery; in its storms of passion; in its serene contemplation of things divine. But they are only clouds! But it is only Art! And yet "Thou sentest a gracious rain upon Thine inheritance and refreshedst it when it was weary." So then the clouds are of some account. And Art? No tender thought, or noble aspiration, or high enterprise is lost to us because Art fashions them into beautiful shapes. They come back to us, as the rain comes from the clouds, and they make our lives fruitful in faith, and wisdom, and love. For the artist lives, and works, and dies; but Art, in its Higher Life, is immortal.

## XVII.

### *MY LORD THE EPILOGUE.*

**B**EFORE closing this volume I should like to leave upon its last page the fragrance of a Rose that has been gathered, the light of a Star that has set ; something that shall express—not as an abstract idea, but as a very concrete presence—this living, and working, and dying of the Artist—this immortality of Art. The grievous thing is that the rose has so often to be torn petal from petal before we realize its full beauty, and that the star so often wanes to its setting before we have learned to rejoice in its light. The Painter or the Poet spends his whole life in mastering his Art, and when he has mastered it—it is time for him to die. And we meanwhile look on, wondering at his strange doings—his seeming failures—questioning much what he is striving after—where he can be leading us. I am not going to tell over again the old story of Milton and his critics—who could see nothing remarkable in “Paradise Lost” except its great length—or of Keats



and the others—who have been avenged. But “My Lord the Epilogue” has yet to speak; and how shall he speak better than through the simple incidents of the life of a great painter?—incidents still fresh in the memories of many of us, and the consideration of which may be very helpful to some who, although striving earnestly after the Higher Life in Art, are yet tempted, or deceived, or assailed, by many Hobgoblins.

In the year 1841, David Cox may be considered to have attained his full strength as a landscape painter. It is certain that within a few years of this date he produced many of his finest works, both in oil and water-colours. If he ever knew anything of the Higher Life in Art he knew it then; if his works are manifestations of it at all, they were full of it then. In that year he sent two of his paintings to the Society of British Artists—“A Heath Scene” and “A Watermill.” There is no reason to suppose that these pictures were not well placed; though the painter himself appears to have been a little doubtful as to his mastery of the material, which was comparatively new to him; for, after seeing them in the exhibition, he wrote to a friend that they “looked chalky for want of glazing, which could not be done, as the day appointed for touching, &c., was during my short visit to Birmingham.” Next year, however, he was again a contributor; but his works were either rejected or hung less favourably. Whether they were again sent

in an unfinished state, and the Committee hesitated a second time to incur the risk of their remaining so throughout the season, there is no evidence to show; but the loss to the Society was irretrievable; under the urgent advice of a friend, David Cox resolved to send there no more. He then painted for the British Institution, another well-known London exhibition; but the treatment he received there appears to have been still more unfavourable. His pictures were again and again rejected. Thus he wrote, "I suppose David knows that my picture is rejected at the Institution," and again, "I am sure there must be worse there." His friend, who resented so deeply his disappointment at Suffolk Street, was equally indignant with the Hanging Committee of Pall Mall. But the advice "to send no more" was not so easy of application; it would simply have had the effect, as we shall see presently, of shutting out from every exhibition in London the paintings of one of the greatest of England's landscapists. As for the painter himself—generous, courageous, large-hearted—he was content to say, in the sweet humour so characteristic of him, "I begin to feel quite furious, and therefore hope to succeed much better." Nevertheless, we do not wonder when we read a little further on that he did not send much more to the British Institution.

Of course there remained the Academy—a Society greater than them all—and to the Academy David Cox

turned. He had, indeed, for years sent there without success; but his letters written about this time are full of the subject, and many of his finest works are described in them as having been painted expressly for the Academy. In 1844 he sent two pictures. In 1845 he wrote to his son, "I am finishing one (kit-cat size), which you saw (mountain, rather dark), which I intend for the Royal Academy." In 1846, "I have begun a large oil-picture,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 3. I hope to get it finished for the Royal Academy." Yes, David Cox knew the Royal Academy. Elect from the flower of the land, *it* could make no mistake—*it* could at least discern where honour was due in Art. And so we read, year after year, the record of his plans and hopes over the paintings he sent there. But the Royal Academy did not know David Cox. We search his life in vain for a single instance in which a picture of his found a place upon its walls.

What does this mean? These men—who could not find a place upon their walls for the works of David Cox—were they simply incompetent to judge of the merits of a landscape? To name them only is sufficient answer to such a suggestion. Holland and Pyne, Linnell, Stanfield and Turner—these are the men against whom the charge of incompetency would have to lie, since they were the leading landscapists in these Societies. Did they, then, knowing what was right,



deliberately choose the wrong, abusing their trust by uniting in the worst spirit of trades-unionism to punish, as a professional rival, one who was a member of a Society in which they had no interest? I cannot believe it. No one can believe it who knows anything of the inner working of Societies like these—the care that is needed to secure a good exhibition season after season, or the strength of generous sentiment that tramples down the frailty of individual jealousies. There is no vice more rare in the studio than that of envious detraction. The painter, busy with his own dreams, may fail to see the splendours after which other men are striving; but, seeing them, he never fails to give them the tribute of his honour. No one can be so wide of the mark as the man who fancies that his pictures are rejected lest they should outshine inferior work. But let us look a little closer into this matter. David Cox was a member of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours. For more than a quarter of a century he had been a constant exhibitor. The Society had no choice but to hang his drawings whether they liked them or not; but still we can judge a little of the estimation in which his works were held by the position given to them in the exhibitions. In 1845 he wrote: “‘The Garden Terrace, Haddon,’ is on the row above the line; ‘Kenilworth’ up quite at the top, consequently only a bold sketch, and I have put prices accordingly; ‘Knaresborough’ is in the



next place; 'Brough' next. My 'Haddon' is my best work. If it could have been hung upon the floor it would have had the light falling upon it, and would have looked—I was going to say—beautiful." It seems strange now to think of this man mildly suggesting that his best work might be placed upon the floor! But it is not for My Lord the Epilogue to seek to change the issue of the Drama. In 1853 David Cox wrote again: "The Committee forget they are the work of the mind. I certainly said I would remain with them as long as I am able to paint for them; but perhaps I may not live to paint any more, and if I should be spared, I think I shall not be able to contribute much." Thus it seems that only a promise, which to him was sacred, restrained him from withholding his drawings from the Water-Colour Society, as he had withheld his paintings from the Society of British Artists. And yet, in this case at least, there arises no question of professional rivalry; while De Wint and Cattermole and the others who were leading men in the Society, and of whose works David Cox himself speaks with generous warmth, were surely men of some judgment and knowledge of Art. What, then, does it mean?

Does it mean that the artists are a "bad lot" altogether? Then let us turn to the critics. *They* know everything, and are they not agreed that David Cox was a great painter? They are agreed—but since how

long? In 1847—a few years only, that is, before he laid down his pencil for the last time, he wrote to a friend describing what he had done to his drawings during the few days usually allowed to a member of a society while the catalogue is being prepared:—"The members were very anxious I should do but little—do nothing indeed to my 'Bolton Abbey'—which they all seem to agree is the very best drawing I have ever made; and they have used the most expressive words of praise I have ever received. I do not expect the newspapers will have the same feeling." So that, however slow his brother painters may have been in learning the lesson he was teaching them, they *did* learn it, from the master himself, without waiting for the intervention of the critics. It would be an endless as well as a graceless task to cite from the reams of newspaper articles in which he was assailed. It is sufficiently known that the writers of the Press were all too late in their discovery of his transcendent genius to do more than crown his head with laurels a little while before it was time for him to lay it down for his last sleep beneath the turf of the village churchyard, steeped in the sunshine or shadowed by the clouds that he had loved to paint.

Let us pass to the grand, the final, the monetary test. It is notorious that the British public did not understand his pictures, and would not buy them. A few indeed of his friends bought them for a few shillings

or a few pounds—and hastily sold them again the moment their market value increased, not guessing that the increase was the incoming of a tide that should sweep away all the old landmarks of the Societies' catalogues, or the picture-dealers' price-lists. Many of his choicest works hung through the season without finding a purchaser, or were taken reluctantly as Art Union prizes. The sale of a picture for 20*l.* was to him an event. In 1846 he wrote:—"You must know that with the sales of my drawings" (he exhibited twelve that year at the Water-Colour Society), "my July dividends, and the sale of my 'Green Lane,' altogether make me able to buy 200*l.* stock." Did he write this in irony? Read a little further:—"The parting with the 'Green Lane' was the most unpleasant part of the transaction, but I hope to do better things some day." Thus we come at last to his own judgment upon his own works. He had sold them by the score for a few shillings each. He had given them as presents to children, and had been troubled to find they were not deemed gay enough in colour. He had exchanged them with a brother artist for a tube of colour worth sixpence; with a colourman for half-a-dozen canvases; with a frame-maker in payment for the trouble of mounting a drawing. And yet he knew, as no one else knew, that what he had done was right, was right as no one else's work was right. But this knowledge was mixed with



such tender humility. Standing before one of his own works, he had been heard to say softly, "Not so bad, David, not so bad." And in the letter I have last quoted, after summing up the mighty product of 200*l.*, he adds: "The parting with the 'Green Lane' was the most unpleasant part of the transaction." He did not like parting with the "Green Lane." He hoped to do better things some day. That is to say, he had eyes to see and a heart to love. His pictures are indeed, after the pattern of his life, a singular blending of truth, modesty, courage, tenderness, and depth of feeling. He did not like parting with the "Green Lane," not through conceit in his own work, but because it was a reflex of the light upon a face which he had seen, an echo of a voice which he had heard. He hoped to do better things some day. And so he parted with the "Green Lane," as one is content to turn from the likeness of a friend when one hears his footstep at the door.

The story is ended. If My Lord the Epilogue were Rosalind, and if Rosalind were a woman, there might be more to say. As it is, we turn from the life of this great painter—its difficulties, its dangers—its reward—to live ourselves the life of which it was the true type—the Higher Life in Art. This Higher Life is the more possible to us by all that he has done. By all that he has done—and by much more. The Royal Academy has given us a roll of names that shall never



die. Its catalogue, beginning with a "Landscape in Human Hair," and "Two Birds in Shell-work on a Rock decorated with Sea Coral," passed to Turner's painting of "The Fighting Téméraire Tugged to her Last Berth," and Landseer's "Sleeping Bloodhound." Half-a-dozen years before the birth of David Cox it was content to exhibit "A Frame of Various Devices, cut in Vellum with Scissors, containing the Lord's Prayer in the Compass of a Silver Threepence;" half-a-dozen years before his death so great a company of artists were knocking at its doors that even David Cox could find no standing-room amongst the crowd. And the lesser Societies, the British Artists and the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, have also done true and loyal service to Art. The one giving hope to the young painters, against whom the doors of the Academy were too fast shut; the other building up a school of water-colour painting that has become an honour to our country. The one graced by its Holland, its Pyne, its Hurlstone; the other by its Cattermole, its Fielding, its De Wint. Even the Press—blind as another Polyphemus—has, by the magic of Mr. Ruskin, served us with a giant's strength. And the people have been willing to be taught—men like Vernon, and Ellis, and Sheepshanks, filling their galleries with the prudence of merchants and the liberality of princes. And yet with all this comes out another truth—as clear as

it is strange—that of all these contemporaries of David Cox none knew until the close of his long life how great a genius they had amongst them. Let no man, therefore, be discouraged because the patient labour of his life finds no immediate recognition. What more shall the Painter ask than to spend his life in mastering his Art, except only that he may have time to master it before he dies. This is the Painter's true reward. And David Cox received it to the full,—he had time, and he did master it. That his companions should have watched him doubtfully, as the Philistines watched the departing of the Ark, “following it even to the border of their land, not knowing whither it would go,” matters but very little. What does concern us greatly is, that “the kine which bore it took the straight way, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not to the right hand nor to the left. And we reaping in the valleys, have lifted up our eyes and have seen it, and have rejoiced to see it.”

As for the kine, they were offered as burnt offerings unto the Lord.

THE END.

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